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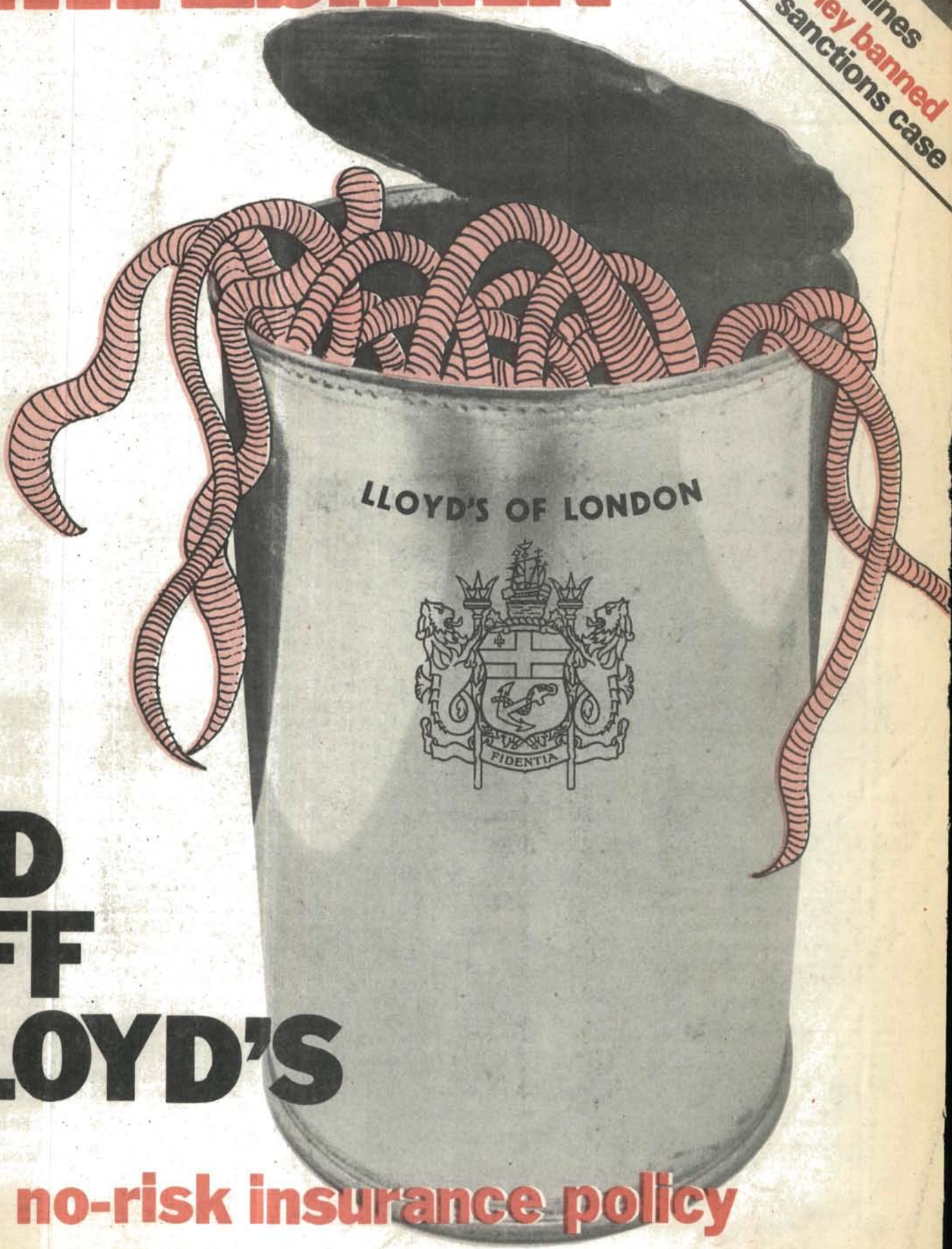

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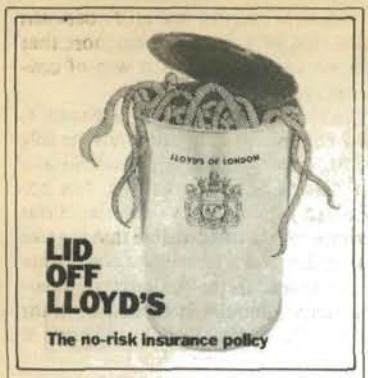

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Do people really want a centre party?

ACCORDING to an opinion poll in last Sunday's *Observer*, a new Social Democratic Party allied with the Liberals 'could sweep to power' if an election were held now. Yet according to another poll for last Monday's *World in Action* (broadly in line with one in the *Sunday Times*) that same hypothetical election would actually eject from their own seats most of the eleven Labour MPs who are threatening to construct such an alliance. Both polls cannot be right. So what is going on?

The public explanation of many politicians is that polls are nonsense, so wild discrepancies are only to be expected. We should be wary of accepting such assessments at face value. Politicians treat polls much as fickle spouses treat adultery: something to be deplored in public but savoured in private. We can be sure that the Gang of 13, and Labour, Liberal and Tory notables are all exploring the polls' details.

According to Conrad Jameson, who runs his own survey research company, they are wasting their time. All polls of the type published in the last fortnight are worthless, as are almost all other opinion polls. We publish Jameson's critique of the polling industry this week, starting on page 13. We don't agree with all that Jameson says, but he raises issues that pollsters and their media clients should face.

The trouble with some newspaper poll reports is that they oversimplify the evidence. One reason is that polls are an expensive form of journalism, often costing ten or twenty times as much as a routine front-page news story. The money is spent in order to obtain a stark headline and a dramatic story. In fact the money also purchases a wealth of detail about public perceptions: how opinions vary by age and class, how opinions on one issue connect with opinions on another, and so on. Invariably public opinion is revealed for something like what it is — a jumble of assorted views that defy simple classifications: subtle shades of grey, rather than black and white. One useful test of a newspaper poll story is whether it attempts to explore these subtleties or not.

MORI's poll in the *Sunday Times* made such an attempt, and produced some interesting conclusions. MORI surveyed voters in three Teesside constituencies, two occupied by 'Gang' MPs — William Rodgers and Ian Wrigglesworth — and one occupied by an old mainstream Labour hand, Arthur Bottomley. First, it indicated that Rodgers's rating has held up well, while an unknown 'social democrat' standing against Bottomley would have a much greater task on his hands; indeed the pattern of movement recorded since 1979 in Rodgers's Stockton seat is very similar to the pattern recorded nationally by NOP in the *Observer*. Unfortunately for the social democrats, constituencies with glamour candidates will be the exception rather than the rule.

Second, the *Sunday Times* report showed that support for a new party runs wide rather than deep. A majority of potential supporters oppose one of its main planks — support for the Common Market — while a sizeable minority either oppose or have no clear-cut view on another plank — proportional representation.

What emerges is that the anticipated new party is liked by many voters, partly because they are none too happy with the present parties, and partly because the potential leaders of a new party seem to be nice people.

A real election fought by a real party is very different from a hypothetical election fought by a handful of media heroes. Real parties are coalitions, not just of different political views, but of different types of people. They are mixtures of the nice and nasty, the stupid and the clever, the shy and the overbearing, the lazy and the active, the orthodox and the eccentric. They are frail, human organisations with mostly second-rate local candidates. A party that doesn't exist is in the happy position of avoiding these problems. Even the best polls cannot yet tell us how the public would react to the real thing. □

Rob Edwards

New reactor for the ministry

THE MINISTRY of Defence is building a new Pressurised Water Reactor (PWR) for HMS Vulcan, the navy's reactor evaluation centre near Thurso in Caithness. Designated 'PWR2' it is scheduled for completion in 1984 and should last 20-25 years: its main use will be as a testing facility for the type of PWR that will power the proposed new generation of Trident submarines. This was revealed in answer to a parliamentary written question by Labour MP Robin Cook last month. Britain's existing four Polaris subarines and dozen 'Hunter-killer' submarines are powered by PWRs: HMS Vulcan is run by Rolls Royce associates — a company set up by the MoD in 1959 — who are currently building the new reactor. PWR2 is to replace the existing PWR at Vulcan which has been used as a testing facility since 1966. One report has suggested that PWR2 is two or three times larger than its predecessor, but the MoD refuses to release information on their relative size. All the MoD have said is that PWR2

> will have a number of advantages over its predecessor, both militarily, and in the areas of operability and maintenance. It will of course be designed to comply with all the latest safety standards.

The PWR was first used to power the USS Nautilus submarine in 1954: since then — much scaled up — it has become by far the most widespread and controversial commercial elecricity-generating reactor in use in the world. In March 1979, it was a PWR at Three Mile Island that nearly devastated Pennsylvania. The Central Electricity Generating Board this week applied for planning permission to build Britain's first 1,200 megawatt PWR at Sizewell in Suffolk. This is due to go to a public inquiry some time next year. If permission is given the CEGB intend to start building in 1983 and to have it completed in six years. □

Sorry for the delay
Our apologies to all postal subscribers who may have received their copies of the 30 January issue late. This was caused by an industrial dispute at the Post Office.

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EXCLUSIVE: Martin Bailey reveals that

Ian Smith will testify against Shell and BP

IAN SMITH, the former Rhodesian Prime Minister, has decided to turn against Shell and BP, the oil giants that helped his regime survive after UDI in 1965. He is helping Lonrho fight a £100 million law-suit against the two companies.

Already Smith has filed a written submission that he only declared UDI after his government received assurances from senior Shell officials that supplies of oil would continue, despite any sanctions that would be imposed. Smith has given details of reports he received from his then Minister of Commerce, George Rudland, who had spoken directly to Shell executives.

This spring Smith will come to London to testify in arbitrarion hearings being held at the Piccadilly Hotel on Lonrho's claim. The quality of Smith's evidence is likely to be crucial in determining the final outcome of the arbitration.

Lonrho, the company that is now bidding to take over Harrods, is claiming damages of £116m. from Shell and BP. Its case stems from its ownership of the Beira-Umtali oil pipeline, which has remained closed since UDI. Lonrho blames Shell and BP's sanctions-busting activities for the pipeline's closure. Specifically, Lonrho is seeking to prove that the oil companies supplied Rhodesia when the pipeline was closed, and hence broke a legally binding agreement to use the pipeline as the *sole route* for supplying Rhodesia. Lonrho's case was launched almost four years ago, and after a sequence of court battles has gone to arbitration.

The arbitrators have been meeting in private, but the arbitration case is likely to be the most detailed investigation yet into sanctions-busting. Shell and BP have been obliged under the legal procedures governing arbitration actions to provide Lonrho with all the relevant documentation in their possession. Last year Lonrho was given files by Shell and BP containing more than 150,000 documents. And with the independance of Zimbabwe and the lifting of sanctions people are now more willing to speak out about what happened during UDI. As one senior Lonrho executive explained: 'The air will soon be full of the trilling of canaries.'

The arbitration hearings formally opened last July in front of three arbitrators. Shell and BP nominated Sir Henry Fisher, a former High Court judge and merchant banker. Lonrho's nominee was Dr Jorge Mota, a distinguished international lawyer from Portugal. Lord Cross of Chelsea, a law Lord, was appointed to head the team of arbitrators.

Early last autumn succession of witnesses explained in detail how the oil companies had continued to supply the Rhodesian market after UDI. Dan Airy, the Operations manager of the Rhodesian oil procurement agency Genta, particularly told the arbitrators about the importation procedures. Shell Mozambique had been directly involved for most of the period of UDI. The Total 'swap' arrangements, which had been in operation between 1968 and 1971, was nothing more that "a red herring . . . just a way of covering up.'

In the United States the Treasury is still continuing its inquiry into the role of Mobil and Caltex in sanctions-busting. The US, unlike Britain, has not granted an amnesty for sanctions crimes so it is still possible that the two American oil companies could face legal action. In the Netherlands a parliamentary inquiry is focussing on the role of the Anglo-Dutch Shell Group in the sanctions story. So the Lonrho arbitration action could well lead to the emergence of further evidence which would assist investigations in America and Holland. □

SHELL RHODESIA (PRIVATE) LIMITED		
Managing Director	:	J.L.K. Whitehead
Main activity	:	Marketing
Office address	:	30, Jameson Avenue
Postal address	:	P.O. Box 982, Salisbury, Rhodesia

This confidential Shell document shows that regular contact was maintained with Rhodesia after UDI. The 1976 edition of Shell's headquarters' *Communication Procedure Guide* includes an entry on Shell Rhodesia — as if it were a normal local Shell subsidiary. The only difference is that the code 'private' had to be used for Rhodesian correspondence. Yet at this time Shell was publicly claiming that it had severed its links with Rhodesia.

Rob Rohrer

Naughty people jailed

A LIVERPOOL judge who sent four young people to prison for wearing 'insulting' crocheted costumes in public erred in law when he imposed the harsh sentences. Judge Edward Jones imprisoned the four for a fortnight each when they appealed against a stipendiary magistrate's decision to fine them £25 each for the offence. Jones, a 66 year old circuit judge, described the costumes as 'extravagant and obscene, disgraceful and disgusting.'

Since 1947 Judge Jones has been an Elder of the Welsh Presbyterian (Calvinistic Methodist) Church and the attitude of many lawyers on Merseyside is that the Judge's impetuous decision owed more to his religious feelings than to an impartial and level-headed exercise of his judicial power.

Under the 1973 Powers of Criminal Courts Act a court hearing an appeal against a lower court's sentence must order a social inquiry report before increasing the sentence to imprisonment. Judge Jones made no attempt to explain, as he is expected to do, why prison was the only suitable remedy he could apply. The four appellants were aged between 18 and 26: none of them had any previous convictions and all were 'of good character'.

'Their mobile art display' as it was called in Court, was very much an impromptu performance. The costumes were part of a travelling sculpture exhibition and a Liverpool gallery had asked the four to wear them for publicity one August Saturday afternoon last year. Calling themselves 'The Furbelows' they strolled through Liverpool's city centre until arrested by

Derek Massey

Three of the Furbelows — whose impromptu street theatre act brought them a jail sentence from a Welsh Presbyterian judge.

Merseyside police. In court there were differing versions of the public's response. The prosecution argued their behaviour was a breach of the 1936 Public Order Act but others thought the crowd's response was predominantly one of amusement. While 'The Furbelows' were in the police cells a procession of guffawing police officers appeared to confirm this effect. Liverpool's stipendiary magistrate fined 'The Furbelows' £25 each and bound them over.

Judge Jones, however, said the costumes must have caused 'at least considerable embarrassment' and sent the Furbelow four to prison. Immobile, bronze male genitalia have not so far been construed as breaching the 1936 Act; if they do, it will mean the removal of Epstein's 18 foot high male nude statue — called Adventure — which dominates the front of Liverpool's largest departmental store. □

Duncan Campbell

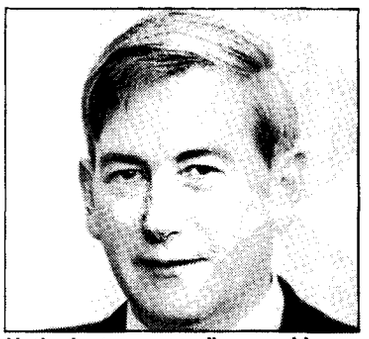
Corrupt MoD land agent jailed

THE BRITISH Ministry of Defence's former Land Agent whose corrupt dealings were exposed in the *New Statesman* last year, has been convicted on 17 charges of deception, accepting bribes, and using documents with intent to deceive. Eric Garland, the former Hong Kong Defence Land Agent, was sentenced by a Hong Kong court late last year to six months imprisonment, suspended for two years. He was ordered to repay his current employers, a subsidiary of Freeman Fox and partners of London, some £50,000 of which he had cheated them.

Garland's offences came to light during an investigation of corruption and the loss of secret information from the electronic espionage station in Hong Kong, which the NS and the *Daily Mirror* carried out last year. A former supervisor at the station, Jock Kane, then described in detail the fiddles and corruption which some employees of the Government Communications HQ intelligence agency had been using to line their pockets. We placed our information concerning Garland and the other past and present senior staff of GCHQ with Kong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), whose subsequent investigation resulted in Garland's conviction on all 17 charges.

During the course of the investigation, it subsequently emerged, GCHQ bugged the rooms in which we were staying, tapped the phones and used the information they got to tip off those in the corruption network. The Foreign Office later admitted that a former GCHQ operations officer, Frank Wilks, who ran a hotel and company and other deals with Garland, had been warned even before we arrived.

We found ample evidence that Garland and Wilks, and another ex-officer had run a hotel company and other



Hetherington: sending evidence where nothing can be done

businesses in order to profit from Garland's position as Defence Land Agent, responsible to the MoD and GCHQ for finding and approving accommodation for their staff with sensitive intelligence jobs. Evidence of Garland's profitable conspiracy with Wilks was published in last year's article. However, ICAC were unable to pursue these allegations, since an Amnesty for corruption offences was decreed four years ago. (The crimes Garland committed at Freeman Fox occurred less than four years ago and thus are not covered by the Amnesty.)

The amnesty does not affect British law, so we provided the full documentary evidence to the Director of Public Prosecutions for action under British law — since it was, after all, the British taxpayer who was cheated by the pair. The DPP, Sir Thomas Hetherington, took no interest, however and told us he had 'forwarded the papers to the Attorney General of Hong Kong' — where, as one may presume the DPP is

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well aware, no legal action is possible because of the Amnesty.'

Later last year, after the Hong Kong Attorney General had indeed taken no action, we wrote again to the DPP, pointing out that the appropriate place to deal with British serving and former officials conspiring to cheat the British government in a Crown Colony was in Britain. Sir Thomas merely replied that his course had been 'proper'.

Jock Kane, whose allegations started the whole affair, had, he says, already spent five years fighting GCHQ from within over a 'total cover-up'. The Foreign Office has admitted that GCHQ warned off a man who has now been proven to be a crook — in the name of 'obligations under the Official Secrets Act'. GCHQ bugged phones and rooms in order to tip off other alleged crooks, British and Chinese. The DPP might now reconsider whether it is sufficient to send evidence of offences to those who can do nothing with it. □

Patrick Wintour

Posts: crisis plan hits trouble

LEADERS of the Union of Communication Workers have put their name to a joint union-management Post Business 'crisis action programme'. The programme prepared over the last month is part of a major efficiency drive to deal at every level with Post's financial crisis. Critics of the programme claim that among other things it advocates sacking irregular attenders and calls for cuts in overtime worked and thus postmen's pay. Some London branches have already passed motions condemning the programme which was revealed in a special branch circular distributed last week. Attempts to nullify the branch circular as illegal were ruled out of order at the last meeting of the powerful UCW London District Council. Critics say under union rules any major agreement effecting take home pay and services must be subject to consultation before an agreement is signed. The ultimate impact of the document is not completely clear since it has to be discussed and implemented locally. Undoubtedly, however, it is a major propaganda weapon in the hands of management.

In the branch circular Tom Jackson, the UCW general secretary, says the prime cause of Posts crisis is the Government's strict cash limits. 'This has meant the capital needed to complete postal mechanisation by 1983 can only be gained by the sale of Post Office assets. The direct intervention of government not only compelled a reduction in Post Office proposed increased charges but deferred their introduction. This has meant up to £31.5m will be lost from Post Office income. The expected £7m profit will be £35m short of the 1980/81 government target. It will also produce a decline in Post Office traffic!'

But having blamed government Jackson, along with the other Post Office unions, commends the comprehensive 140 point action programme as Post's chief remedy. This overwhelmingly places the burden of saving the Post Office on his own members. The detailed checklist of savings centres on demanning, less overtime, fewer collections, greater job flexibility, tougher discipline and less leave. Such is the crisis that the programme even recommends 'take full advantage of any credit periods allowed on payments.' It ends with the words 'We must not fail in 1981.' It comes at a time when PO management appear to be trying to convert what were originally only voluntary local productivity agreements into mandatory ones: hence last week's disputes in Manchester and London railways and the backlog of mail. □

Martin Short

Countryman's first convictions

AFTER TWO AND A HALF years investigating allegations of London police corruption, Operation Countryman has scored its first courtroom success. At the Old Bailey last week three men were jailed, having pleaded guilty to obtaining reward money by deception. They were not detectives.

At Christmas 1978 Det-Sgt Derek Hall was doubtless the toast of Barkingside's Regional Crime Squad. Acting on his information, the police had been able to ambush in spectacular fashion several gangs of criminals seconds in advance of attacks on Securicor vehicles.

It was exactly the right tonic for the Met. 'Robbery', Sir David McNee had just lamented in his annual report, 'went up by 23 per cent (in 1977) to reach a total which has doubled in the last four years'. Professional criminals, it seemed to some people, might be taking over control of the streets.

But not around Barkingside, where Derek Hall was showing once again that a good informant can be worth his weight in gold. In this case, the name was gold as well: Tommy Gold, who, with an associate called Johnny Silver, was delivering to Hall details of robberies planned to 'go off' all over the East End.

Gold & Silver first predicted that three young men would be found on 28 September waiting for a Securicor vehicle outside the National Westminster branch in Bow Road: names were supplied, together with all the details of the stolen van they would be using (and in which weapons would be found). Everything fitted, and the three were jailed after they had pleaded guilty to conspiracy to rob. On 11 November two more men were collected in remarkably similar circumstances outside an Express Dairy, in Southwark. Early in 1979 Gold & Silver produced eight more villains in three further attempted robberies: at Keymarkets in Romford, at the East Ham Co-op Dairy, and the Inland Revenue offices in Gants Hill.

In just six months, Hall's informers had produced 13 'bodies', all red-handed. Ten were jailed and so would the other three have been but for Countryman's intervention.

In truth, Gold & Silver were provocateurs, not informants. Far from reducing robbery, and violence on the streets, they were generating those activities. As Silver was later to admit: 'I know we was bad bastards setting them jobs up, and there ain't no excuse for it . . .'

Reward money was their motive. In September 1978 Det-Sgt Hall met Dick Hellaby, national security manager for Securicor, together with a consultant to the firm, Jo Goyder, OBE QPM, former assistant commissioner of the City of London Police. He introduced them to 'Tommy Gold', actually a minicab proprietor named Montague FitzMaurice, and 'Johnny Silver', who was FitzMaurice's half-brother Frederick Skipp. Gold wanted £1,000 for information about a robbery timed for 28 September.

A deal was done, but Gold would give details only to Hall. On 29 September, just after the robbers had been ambushed, Goyder paid £1,000 to Gold in the presence of Hall. About this time Securicor began advertising £5,000 rewards for anyone giving information leading to the conviction of persons attacking their crews. This increased the incentive for Gold & Silver, who eventually managed to gross £14,000 from Securicor alone by way of such deceptions.

The racket was exposed when Countryman detectives (from provincial forces) began to visit prisons investigating convicts' complaints against London detectives. Young villains produced some remarkably similar tales about two East Enders in their thirties or forties who had suggested participation in acts of robbery.

These 'victims' readily admitted they had been willing to execute violent crimes: they complained, however, that Skipp and FitzMaurice had in each case masterminded the conspiracy, and often provided vehicles and weapons. And the nature of the crime, sometimes, was not correctly indicated.

IN TWO CASES, the 'plan' was to snatch cashbags from a woman civilian. But on the day, a Securicor van appeared instead: followed swiftly by posses of armed police. The robbers then had to take the full rap for an attempt on Securicor — with a car-load of Gold's pickaxe handles found nearby and attributed to them. The convicts complained that the men who had incited them were never arrested. Gold & Silver's racket perfectly served their own greed, the Met's body-count requirements, and Securicor's duty to foil attacks on its employees.

By April 1980 Countryman officers had enough to justify arresting Gold, Silver and six alleged accomplices. Confessing, Gold & Silver said their dealings with Hall had begun over information on a genuine robbery — but it had soon been indicated to them, they said, that 'these things could be engineered'.

How could so many people be taken in? Securicor believed the 'informants' because Det-Sgt Hall had produced them. And two top-ranking Yard detectives paid over £1,000 to Gold & Silver because of Hall's introduction. But Hall and his crime-squad colleagues should have known that such consistently detailed information could only come from 'insiders', not from mere eavesdroppers.

In four out of the five set-ups, the getaway vehicles could have been traced directly to Gold & Silver or associates of theirs. And there were other links to the provocateurs which went uninvestigated: such as the woman at whose home Gold met the two dupes for the Express Dairies job (one of them identified her to Metropolitan detectives).

DEFENDING COUNSEL tried to shift some of the blame for the racket onto a 'Detective X'. But the Countryman officer giving evidence could only say that this was 'not an impossibility'. Unimpressed, the judge gave Gold & Silver four years each.

Scotland Yard can now point to a fall in the number of robberies on its territory, and new safeguards are employed to help expose false informants. But the Yard's own attitude to criminal statistics has much to do with the careers of men like Gold & Silver. Even putting aside the possibility of corruption, it's clear that the pressure for 'results' encourages detectives to take at face-value informants who offer to deliver numerous bodies: juries who reject the evidence of 'supergrasses' are obviously doubtful that detectives take all the care they might. The Gold & Silver phenomenon has the same deceptive attraction that it had in the days of Jonathan Wild: and but for the painstaking inquiries of the much-abused 'Swedey', the Met's star detectives might still be confusing precious metal with dross.

Sgt Derek Hall is no longer a police officer, and no policeman has been charged in connection with these matters. □

Martin Short was co-author of The Fall of Scotland Yard, *Penguin 1977.*

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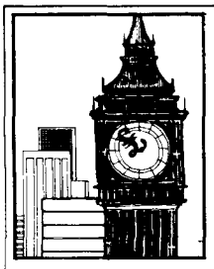

Peter Kellner, Political Editor

Socialism with a non-inflationary face

THIS WEEK the TUC published its annual economic review[1]. The 40-page booklet, *Plan for Growth*, has been widely reported for calling for a £6 billion increase in public spending. But the significance of *Plan for Growth* goes beyond that — both in what it contains and, more crucially, in what it leaves out.

What it contains is a clearly written, attractively presented, well documented analysis of how Thatcherism is going wrong. It is by some margin the most polished and professional TUC publication I have ever seen.

But what it leaves out is any discussion of incomes policy. By 'incomes policy' I don't just mean a fixed norm cobbled together in a crisis — the way Labour governments normally introduce such policies: I mean the role of government in determining, or discussing or guiding such things as the level of pay rises that can accommodate an acceptable level of inflation; and the balances between private and public consumption, between overall consumption and investment, and between earnings and profits. The TUC rightly demands nationally agreed policies on all sorts of things,from the use of North Sea oil revenues to the future of the nationalised industries; but it wholly bucks the issue of pay.

There are two main reasons for this. One is political and honourable; the other is intellectual and shabby. The political reason is that past incomes policies have been explicitly designed to reduce real wages (in the short term at least) and simultaneously to weaken the bargaining power of individual unions.

All too often, however, understandable opposition to *bad* incomes policies slides over into an intellectually dishonest opposition to *all* incomes policies. At its most extreme this opposition denies any link between pay rises and inflation. It is, curiously a view shared with pure monetarists: Milton Friedman also denies such a link. But Friedman's alternative explanation — that money supply is solely responsible — is, very properly, dismissed.

If money supply does not cause inflation, and costs (of which wages are a large part) don't, then what does? At this point the argument tends to degenerate into slogans about capitalist cartels and monopoly price-fixing. That is not to say such observations about the imperfections of the market are without justice; but they do not amount to a coherent theory of inflation.

PART OF THE problem is that two of the intellectual godfathers of progressive post-war British politics had little to say about incomes policies in their main works. But John Maynard Keynes and Anthony Crosland finally acknowledged the need for such policies — but both died before integrating their ideas with the rest of their thinking. In 1944, two years before his death, Keynes responded to one critic who offered a stylised analysis of the problem of containing inflation by replying:

> I do not doubt that a serious problem will arise as to how wages are to be restrained when we have a combination of collective bargaining and full employment. But I am not sure how much light the kind of analytical method you apply can throw on this essentially political problem.

Crosland at first took a very different view. In 1955, in the first edition of *The Future of Socialism*, he said very little about income

Len Murray & Anthony Crosland: hear no incomes policy, see no incomes policy . . .

determination, but by 1973, when Crosland wrote *Socialism Now*, he considered that

> It is the purest wishful thinking to suppose that in an increasingly planned economy (especially when a growing part of the population is employed in the public sector) governments can adopt a *dirigiste* attitude to the control of prices but a *laissez-faire* attitude to the determination of incomes.

Crosland, however, like Keynes, died before he had a chance to expand on this view, and construct a socialist method for determining incomes.

An attempt has now been made to repair this omission. Two of Crosland's closest political aides, David Lipsey and Dick Leonard, have edited a book of essays under the title *The Socialist Agenda: Crosland's legacy*[2]. Where *The Future of Socialism* said less about incomes policy than any other topic, *The Socialist Agenda* is the other way round. Inume policy consumes all or part of four of the twelve essays, most notably in contributions by Professor James Meade and by William McCarthy.

Meade's proposal is that there should be a mixture of free collective bargaining and arbitration. If employers and workers can reach agreement, all well and good; but if they can't, a national Pay Commission would arbitrate. The commission would be charged with considering both national economic policy and the specific circumstances of the dispute (like the need to deal with skill shortages). Its verdict would be legally binding on employers; workers would not be so bound — but if they rejected the arbitration award and went on strike, Meade proposes that financial sanctions, involving such things as tax credits and social security payments, could be applied.

Meade acknowledges that his ideas could not be imposed on an unwilling labour movement. His

> system would work only if it were generally accepted as being a Better Way; sanctions would be an issue only in the exceptional and *ex hypothesi* generally unpopular case of refusal to accept an impartial award.

That strikes be as optimism of a tall order. Meade's proposal might have stopped the last Labour government from getting into a tangle over the Fords pay deal in the autumn of 1978 — when James Callaghan found he could not in practice enforce his threat of sanctions against the company of coming to agreements with the unions for a settlement that vastly exceeded the official pay norm. But would it have prevented the local authority workers' dispute a few weeks later? On all the available evidence the strikers were 'generally unpopular', but this did not stop them striking. Had they, as low-paid workers, faced extra financial penalties by striking, the confrontation inside the Labour movement would have been even worse than it was.

WHAT MEADE LACKS in political acumen, McCarthy robustly makes up. McCarthy addresses himself directly to the 'essentially political problem' that Keynes identified. An incomes policy, he says, cannot 'act as an instrument of amateur egalitarianism'. (Changes in the tax system are better for that.) All it can do is 'influence and modify the overall level at which personal incomes expand.' Crucially, an incomes policy can never hope to reduce settlements more than 25 per cent below the 'going rate —a lesson the Callaghan government learned the hard way two years ago.

Ah yes, but what is the 'going rate'? Here McCarthy advises ministers and Treasury officials to discard their computer print-outs and head for the Rose and Crown:

> By the going rate I mean the rate of pay increase which intelligent men on both sides 'think they can get away with'. In most years this can be culled from a process of prolonged and exhausting pub crawling during the September meeting of the Trades Union Congress. It can then be refined further by visits to annual meetings of the CBI, the IPM [Institute of Personnel Managers] and a carefully constructed network of personal contacts.

Somewhere between Meade and McCarthy are some good ideas struggling to get out. The Conservative option of using unemployment as the weapon for reducing wage settlements and inflation is not (at least, ought not to be) open to a Labour government. Yet the kind of expansion the TUC has called for this week will cause greater inflation unless some accommodaction can be found between collective bargaining and national policy. A Labour Party manifesto that did not acknowledge this would lack credibility.

On the other hand, only the Labour Party has any hope of doing a deal with the unions that could achieve expansion without greater inflation. A social-contract-with-teeth will be a difficult thing to agree inside the Labour Party; ultimately it comes down to what the TUC can deliver in return for its £6 billion shopping list. Yet an agreed package of expansion and incomes policies (including price and profits) could win Labour the next election — and ditch the social democrats into the bargain. □

1. *Plan for Growth: TUC Economic Review 1981;* TUC publications; £1
2. *The Socialist Agenda: Crosland's legacy,* edited by David Lipsey and Dick Leonard; Cape, £7.95

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A most unsavoury incident

CHRISTOPHER HIRD reports on the latest hushed-up scandal at Lloyd's, the famous insurance market.

ON 3 NOVEMBER last year around 3,700 members of Lloyd's — the London insurance market — trooped into the Royal Albert Hall to discuss possible reforms of their organisation. The chairman Mr Peter Green did not expect an entirely uneventful meeting or uncritical reception for the proposals which his committee had produced. Like everyone else connected with Lloyd's he was aware that events of the last few years had strained almost to breaking point the slender bonds of trust on which the whole operation depended.

Like many bits of the City of London Lloyd's is an institution in which the few control, almost without regulation, the money or wealth of the many. And, like many other bits of the City of London, it is a highly remunerative activity for the few. The show keeps going only so long as the outside world continues to believe

Universal Pictorial

Peter Green: found 'grave irregularities'

that places like Lloyd's are the repository of unrivalled expertise and probity. There have been plenty of examples recently suggesting that this might not be the case: those at the 3 November meeting knew of many of these. They did not know of another equally important dispute over the insurance of Hoffmann-La Roche's chemical plant in Seveso, Italy, because serious attempts — until now successful — have been made to keep this 'within the Lloyd's family.'

For those unfamiliar with this curious and unique family some explanation of its structure is in order. Lloyd's — the name derives from a seventeenth century coffee house — is an insurance market. Those who wish to insure their ships, factories, chief executive's life or whatever ask a Lloyd's broker to place the business. The broker's job is to do this at the most attractive price to the customer; the business may go to an insurance company or to the Lloyd's market. The underwriters lounge around the Lloyd's Underwriting Room waiting for the brokers to bring them business, which is then generally spread around several, or even dozens, of underwriters.

These brokers and underwriters are the working members of Lloyd's; most of the financial risk of the business they deal in is taken by the non-working members of Lloyd's. There are around 15,000 such rich people, worth over £100,000 who have pledged all their assets to meet the insurance claims. These people — the 'names' — are organised into syndicates, which are managed by the working underwriters. (Some 3000 working members of Lloyd's are also 'names'). So long as the underwriters do their job properly — collecting more premium income than they pay out in claims — the names make a reasonable return: over £7,000 each in 1977, the last year for which Lloyd's reported under its system of closing each account three years after the end of the year. Unofficial forecasts suggest 1978 will be better but 1979 will show a £74 million loss.

THE CONTINUING success of Lloyd's depends crucially on people continuing to trust the brokers and underwriters: both the insured and non-working underwriters need to believe that their best interests are being pursued. In recent years several individual incidents have cast doubt on this, especially when combined with the way Lloyd's has developed.

Today the eight big broking firms control the eight big underwriting agents who manage the syndicates; half the underwriting capacity in Lloyd's is under the control of brokers. So there is a conspicuous conflict of interest: the brokers have the job of getting the cheapest rates for their customers from underwriters who they control and who have an interest in charging the highest rates for their syndicate members.

This would matter less if there was widespread confidence in Lloyd's ability to prevent irregularities and to do its underwriting job well. Unfortunately there is not. Take, for example, the case of computer leasing insurance in America. Lloyd's provided an enormous amount of such cover protecting leasing companies against the possibility that their customers would cancel their leasing contracts early. When — unsurprisingly — a new generation of computers came along, this is just what happened and Lloyd's has received 14,000 claims, which at the last estimate amounted to $175 million.

But the problems have not just been confined to poor underwriting judgement. The Sasse affair drew attention to many of Lloyd's vulnerable points. Mr Tim Sasse was the manager of a syndicate which found itself lodged with claims, eventually amounting to a loss of £21.5 million. On investigation it proved that the syndicate had taken on two and a half times the business it was meant to and there were, in the words of Peter Green, 'grave irregularities in the handling and accounting for insurance' placed with the syndicate. Some of the syndicate's 110 members were unwilling to cough up their £150,000 share of the loss — which would have bankrupted some of them — and in the end Lloyd's agreed to pay all but £6.25 million of the total claim, by spreading the loss among all the members.

Elsewhere, even more serious things have

'We have to wear 4 or 5 hats to be successful'

been going on: a dozen syndicates have been investigated internally and two members of Lloyd's have been arrested and charged with conspiracy to defraud. Concern about such happenings led to the setting up of a committee under Sir Henry Fisher, which reported last year. This was the basis of the reforms presented to the meeting in November which are incorporated in a private bill going through Parliament at the moment. However, as some of Fisher's important proposals have been ignored or watered down the bill is meeting some opposition, largely on the grounds that the system of self regulation proposed is not sufficiently free of conflicts of interests. The story of the dispute over the Hoffmann-La Roche policy — in which two underwriters refused to pay their share of the claim — illustrates with some clarity the need for an effective, independent system of regulation.

IN 1974 Hoffmann-La Roche decided to increase the cover on their Icmesa chemical plant in Seveso. So they approached several London brokers including Byas, Mosley, with whom they had dealt for many years.

But this was no ordinary deal. Hoffmann-La Roche had already taken out the insurance with a 'captive' insurance company which they owned — Intertrade. This is a common practice amongst large companies who take the view that they can carry their own risks, so why pay premiums to an outside insurance market? In addition these captive companies are frequently registered in the Bahamas or other low tax zones —as was Intertrade — so that they can be used to accumulate profits overseas.

Frequently such captive insurance is then reinsured with outsiders, such as Lloyd's. This indeed was what Intertrade sought to do, except that it was only trying to place 5 per cent of the risk with Lloyd's. It explained that it merely

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wanted 'an established market to support the rate'. This can be an important consideration for a captive insurance company which has to persuade the tax authorities that the deal is being done at a proper price.

In this case the premium being paid by Hoffmann-La Roche to its captive did appear to be very high. Intertrade were to provide cover of Dm50 million, in return for a premium of 10 per cent. In addition, the policy did not cover the first Dm10 million claimed.

Byas, Mosley sent one of their employees — a Mr R.B. Tyler — off to the market to place their share of this very lucrative business. In total 17 underwriters accepted a share of the Dm 252,000 premium and Mr Tyler told those he spoke to that the sole purpose of this policy was to transfer funds to the Hoffmann-La Roche captive company and no claim would be brought under the policy.

The policy lasted for 1974, and was renewed, with the annual premium, in 1975 and 1976. On 10 July 1976 a valve broke in the Seveso plant and a highly dangerous cloud of chemicals escaped, covering a wide area around the plant. Animals died, humans suffered severe burns and an area of 20 miles radius had to be cleared. Within six weeks it was obvious to Hoffmann-La Roche that the accident was going to cost them a large amount of money (their latest offer of £50 million is still under consideration in Italy) and they wrote to Byas, Mosley saying that they expected a total loss on the policy — they would, in other words, be claiming for the total amount covered.

At this stage a curious piece of wording in the policy came to light. The policy lasted for a year and the clause covering the insurance said 'In respect of all payments made during the currency of this policy.' In effect this meant that the underwriters would only have to pay if a claim was made in 1976. But in claims of this sort negotiations often go on for years. This was, at best, a sloppy form of wording. All the underwriters were therefore asked to agree to a change in the wording, so that it related to payments made in future years.

However, two underwriters, Mr Michael Meacock and Mr Frank Barber — a member of the Committee of Lloyd's until last year — said they had no intention of paying as they had taken on the business on the understanding that there would never be a claim. In their view, the premium was nothing more than a fee for their 'expertise' in providing a market quotation. Between them these two had received annual premium income of Dm65,000 each and were liable for Dm650,000 (£150,000 at today's exchange rate).

BY THE SPRING of 1980 it was clear that the policy would be a total loss and further attempts were made to persuade Meacock and Barber to settle, without success. In August one of the managing directors of Byas, Mosley went to get the advice of the deputy chairman of Lloyd's. After this meeting he wrote:

> Naturally no word of this dispute has been allowed to reach our clients and we feel most strongly that this position must be maintained.
>
> We feel that it is absolutely essential that this problem should be settled within the Lloyd's family as any suggestion that the claim would not be met in full could have incalculable repercussions on future relationships.

The dispute posed a particular problem for Byas, Mosley as Hoffmann-La Roche was by far their biggest customer. But clearly it also posed a problem for Lloyd's as a whole. First, it obviously did not inspire confidence in the market if underwriters refused to cough up. Second, it was not the best advert for Lloyd's that it was co-operating in essentially phoney business for the convenience of moving funds around a large multinational company.

Keystone

Hoffman-La Roche's plant at Seveso: cause of an unseemly wrangle over who should pay

Whether or not this was what the policy was intended to be soon became a matter of heated argument. There is no doubt that Mr Tyler described the policy as 'no risk' to underwriters. However, none of the other brokers who placed the business admits to so doing and Mr Tyler has — in the words of one of his directors — 'been unable to explain his action, in rational terms . . .' A further mystery is why two experienced underwriters expected to be able to pick up premium income without any risk whatsoever.

It has not, unfortunately, proved possible to discover with any certainty the complete story as the participants are unwilling to talk to the *New Statesman* about the affair. But three features of the Hoffmann-La Roche policy seem odd: the very high premium, the wording of the insurance clause and the very small amount offered as re-insurance. There is no doubt, it seems, that Lloyd's was being asked 'to support the rate'; there is some dispute over whether this carried any risk.

Anyway Byas, Mosley's pleas to the Lloyd's authorities fell on deaf ears: the brokers themselves had to accept responsibility for the disputed part of the claim. However, Mr Barber told us this week that he had made an ex-gratia payment to Byas, Mosley within the last fortnight. It is clear that the brokers do not view this kind of behaviour as an isolated exception.

AT THE END of August, one of the joint managing directors of Byas, Mosley, Mr K.C.L. Webb, who has been in Lloyd's for over fifty years, wrote to Peter Green. Saying he was not proud of what had gone on, he continued:

> neither am I enamoured by the conduct of underwriters, with honourable exceptions, who seek to avoid their responsibilities, to which you made reference in your speech to the Annual General Meeting in June. . . . Perhaps here I may mention yet another unsavoury incident to which we have been subjected in the past twelve months. A confidential telex message from an overseas client was shown by one of our brokers to an underwriting box — it was promptly photographed and somehow was seen by the competing brokers — they told us so themselves as did our very irate client. Needless to say we did not secure the business. I suppose this is the price one has to pay as the result of declining moral standards generally and the calibre of staff that, as employers, we have to contend with, both on the broking and underwriting sides.

Mr Webb ends his letter by suggesting that the text of 'Mr Cuthbert Heath's cable to his agent in San Francisco at the time of the Earthquake in 1906 be made compulsory and regular reading for the whole of the Lloyd's community.' This cable is integral to the Lloyd's mythology. At a time when other insurers were quibbling about paying, Cuthbert Heath paid up, thus establishing Lloyd's good name and ensuring a steady stream of American business. In other words, the centrepiece of Lloyd's appeal as a unique insurance market is in jeopardy because the fragile structure of trust is crumbling at the edges. Because such fundamental features are now in doubt, the proposals for reform need to be examined particularly critically.

The Fisher report's two most important proposals were to replace the Committee of Lloyd's by a more powerful Council and end the ownership of underwriting agents by brokers. The bill currently before parliament does not deal with the second point. Although it proposes a new council it leaves the right of veto over its actions with the membership as a whole: 500 can petition for a special meeting. As 19 of the 25-strong committee would be working members of Lloyd's or their nominees and as the working members in London tend to dominate meetings, the chances of Lloyd's remaining under the control of brokers is strong. What this might mean can be judged from the recent remark of one major broker, John Walbrook of Minet Holdings:

> We have to wear four or five hats to be successful but a legal mind doesn't understand that.

As the bill also proposes to give working members and staff immunity from legal liability, it looks like an attempt to protect, not reform Lloyd's. □

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CENSORSHIP

What mothers mustn't be told

Patrick Wintour

LAST WEEK, in a case similar to that of the Granada steel papers, the Court of Appeal banned Thames TV from showing a programme about the drug Primodos, on the grounds that it was a breach of confidentiality. Though the Court also banned Thames from disclosing the contents of the programme, the *New Statesman* has independently obtained a copy of the transcript. It details how the German drug company Schering justified marketing and then refusing to withdraw a hormone pregnancy test (HPT) drug Primodos, even though the drug was widely claimed to cause malformed babies.

In the film a former Schering UK research director reveals that one of the reasons the company did not wish to withdraw the drug, despite the criticisms, was that at that time it might have thrown doubt on the company's main product, contraceptive pills, which used the same hormones as Primodos. In the film Dr Briggs, the research director, explained: 'It wasn't my decision but I would guess that the opinion of the experts in Germany and elsewhere was that evidence of pregnancy tests was one thing but to cast doubt on a major method of family planning, on this very slender evidence really, would not only have been a major commercial disaster but a real human disaster . . . we would have thrown panic into millions of women worldwide.'

The programme itself began by quoting parents who had been given the drug and said that hundreds of mothers around the world were convinced that the drug had caused their children to be deformed. Two pending test court cases, expected to last six months, would involve complex arguments on which the programme explained it could not comment, saying that it would only deal with the wider implications for society. Thames's fear was of falling foul of contempt of court.

BUT none of three appeal court judges last week felt there had been a contempt. Lord Justice Shaw and Lord Justice Templeman, with Lord Denning dissenting, said the programme had instead breached the law of confidence.

Lord Justice Shaw said that 'English liberties did not include a licence for the mercenary betrayal of business confidences.' The issue was that the producer of the programme, David Elstein, had previously worked for Schering on a freelance basis advising them on how to deal with adverse publicity about the drug. Elstein had access to confidential information. After completing his consultancy — for which he was paid £200 a day — Elstein suggested to Schering that he make a programme about Primodos. Schering, after a little delay, refused to co-operate and issued a writ claiming breach of confidence and contempt of court.

Lord Justice Shaw said that 'Schering were entitled to be protected from gratuitous onslaughts even when they assumed the guise of public crusades' and described the argument that all the material was available from public sources as at best 'cynical . . . to revise the recollection of matters which might be detrimental to the interests of some organisation was not to be condoned because the facts are already known to some'.

THE PROGRAMME went into details of the legal difficulties parents of deformed children had encountered. Experts pointed out that to get damages negligence had to be proved; that it is hard to prove what has caused deformities and that one in 40 of all babies are born damaged. Though Thames did find an American case where a successful action for damages over HPT had been brought, the problems in Britain were immense. The emotional and financial pressure of such court cases are intense. With the prospects of at least two appeals to the House of Lords a lawyer for Primodos told Thames he thought it likely that the case would not be settled until 1985.

AS the programme says, the aggrieved parents 'still cannot understand how eight years could elapse between the first warning and the eventual withdrawal of the drug'. Research published in 1967 by Dr Elizabeth Gal apparently showed that 19 out of 100 mothers of damaged children had taken hormone pregnancy tests. Only four out of 100 had in a normal control group. Dr Briggs said he contacted Dr Gal and now says: 'It's a conclusion that's now very widely held that the initial study was just misleading.' Thames described the scientific criticisms of the study and further research Briggs found which disproved an alleged link between spina bifida and HPT sales. Briggs nevertheless told Berlin Head Office that 'the onus of proof must be on us to establish the drug is still safe'. While further studies were being made a safe urine test for pregnancy was discovered. Schering's medical advisers said they thought selling Primodos was no longer justifiable. Schering, however, continued selling the drug as a treatment for missing periods. Despite a Committee on safety of Medicines Report in 1975 which appeared to support Dr Gal's findings and further warnings in 1977 from the same body, the drug was still sold. But Primodos was not finally withdrawn until a vigorous campaign led by Jack Ashley brought a great deal of notoriety to the drug. □

Labour right-wingers return to the party's grass roots, and it's back to monkey business as usual

Frank and earnest

Nicholas Murray

MEMBERS OF the Electrical, Electronic, Telecommunication and Plumbing Union (EETPU) who live in Bermondsey in south east London have just received a letter from their General Secretary, Frank Chapple, soliciting their support in a campaign against the Far Left clique who have recently taken over the Bermondsey Labour Party. Chapple wishes to return it to 'the ordinary working people of Bermondsey.' The letter comes complete with a tear-off slip for those who are prepared to join the Labour Party.

The Frank Chapple of Wembley — scourge of the smoke filled room and the hollowness of the union bloc vote — is very different from the Chapple of Bermondsey. Fourteen new EETPU branch affiliations have been received since the end of last year by the Southwark-Bermondsey Labour Party, though not all of them name who will be the branch delegate. Once accepted the branch has at least one automatic place on the 80-strong constituency General Management Committee, run in Bermondsey since last March by a narrow Left majority. Some of the EETPU branches asking to affiliate are miles from the constituency.

When the Bermondsey Party secretary, Peter Tatchell, investigated those EETPU delegates who had been named he found that delegates purporting to be elected by branches had, in fact, been appointed by head office without the knowledge or consent of individual branches. Thus right-wing councillor Charles Sawyer, supposedly elected by the London EESA (white collar section) of the EETPU, was unknown to the Secretary of the branch.

The Southwark-Bermondsey Party see this as a threat to the principle that delegates are elected and accountable to genuine branches which genuinely elect them. The Labour Party national agent, however, says the EETPU are acting constitutionally.

All EETPU affiliations to the Party are frozen while the Party's national organisation subcommittee investigate the question. The outcome of this inquiry will be awaited by at least 30 constituency parties the EETPU claim to be fighting to save.

All at the Co-op

F. R. Spofforth

SHOUTING, BOOING and threats characterised the annual general meeting of the Islington Co-operative Party last week, which at times came close to degenerating into a riot. At stake was control of the General Management Committee of Islington North — where Michael O'Halloran became MP 12 years ago.

Since then the local Chicago-style machine run by O'Halloran's supporters has maintained control of the constituency; more than once they have come into conflict with Labour's national executive over the local party's refusal to admit new members, and its rough-and-ready style of running meetings.

But gradually the O'Halloran faction has lost its supremacy, and the Islington North GMC is now finely balanced. The Co-op's five nominees have become decisive. Until now they have always been O'Halloranites. But had last week's Co-op meeting voted to switch sides, the MP's critics would have gained ascendancy.

Not surprisingly, tempers ran high. Allegations of malpractice were levelled against local Co-op officers, including manipulation of membership lists and rigging of ballot papers. The meeting produced votes marginally favouring the existing, pro-O'Halloran officers and their candidates — but then the whole AGM was declared invalid by Dave Wetzel of the Co-op's London Political Committee, on the grounds that the total votes cast had consistently exceeded the number of those present who were entitled to vote.

Finally Wetzel announced there would have to be a special meeting to consider last year's membership applications, before a new AGM can be convened. The tragi-comedy of Islington North may be about to enter its last, absurd but decisive stage. □

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CLEM ANDERSON WAS DECAPITATED.

THE BAXTERS AND THE HOGANS WERE BURNT TO A CRISP.

DR. PARSONS TOOK AN OVERDOSE OF LIQUID NICOTINE.

MR. AND MRS. ROBERTS WERE BITTEN BY NINE RATTLESNAKES.

ADDIE MASON DROWNED.

JUANITA QUINN DIED IN HER SLEEP.

Or was it murder?

Detective Jake Pepper was convinced none of these deaths was accidental. He was sure one man was responsible: Robert Hawley Quinn. But how could he prove it?

This series of bizarre and horrible deaths is now the subject of a major new Sunday Times serial. Written by Truman Capote, author of 'In Cold Blood', it tells of Detective Jake Pepper's attempt to bring Robert Hawley Quinn to justice.

Was Quinn guilty? Or was Pepper obsessed? How was the Blue River tied into the deaths? And what was the significance of the miniature handcarved coffins, each bearing the photograph of a victim?

'Handcarved Coffins'—a true account of murder in a small American town. Start reading it in The Sunday Times.

Truman Capote's 'Handcarved Coffins'.

THE SUNDAY TIMES

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MURDOCH

Why Biffen is wrong

BRUCE PAGE argues that the government is breaking the law by its wilful misreading of the accounts of Times Newspapers.

'WE ARE immensely encouraged by the excellent circulation which *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* have achieved . . . All this underlines our belief that high quality newspapers can earn outstanding loyalty from their readership, and *it gives us confidence for the future*.' We have added our own emphasis to the words which Gordon Brunton, of the Thomson Organisation, pronounced just nine months ago.

This week, the same man and the same organisation are claiming with urgent solemnity that Times Newspapers Ltd is in such bankrupt state that the whole caboodle must be flogged off at once to Rupert Murdoch — and no hanging-around with the Monopolies Commission, which as we all know is empowered only to investigate 'going concerns'. Apart from the fact that employees elsewhere of the Thomson Organisation may readily conclude that an expression of confidence from Mr Brunton is a good moment to take to the lifeboats, what are we to make of this peculiar situation?

It will bear repeating that *The Times* and the *Sunday Times* are separate newspapers, and that monopoly law demands that they be examined separately. Nobody, of course, doubts that *The Times* is in deadly financial straits.

But the *Sunday Times* has a turnover of some £53 million a year. Assuming for a moment that one accepts the highly pessimistic, and largely inexplicable calculations made by Trade Secretary John Biffen (on the basis of figures served up by Thomsons), then the paper's losses *could* be running at about 1.5 per cent of turnover, or £700,000 a year.

Most people concerned with the daily management of the *Sunday Times* consider that the paper is doing rather better, even trading at a slender profit. And everyone, even Gordon Brunton, thinks that its general commercial prospects are quite heart-warming.

The *Sunday Times* managers may be wrong about their trading profit — although their case is worth examining in some detail. But what is certain is that Britain under Thatcher's recession contains a great many important businesses whose bosses would start ordering champagne if they felt confident they could limit immediate losses to less than two per cent of turnover, and look forward to a rewarding future in the market-place. If Mr Biffen genuinely doubts the *Sunday Times*'s status as a 'going concern' — and isn't just keeping the Monopolies Commission at bay because of Tory gratitude to Rupert Murdoch — then his definition must be an elevated one indeed. These days, after all, even ICI is trading at a loss.

The fact is that the fate of two of Britain's most important newspapers, and of lesser but still-significant institutions like the *Times Educational Supplement* and *TLS*, is being decided in an atmosphere of intrigue, distrust and confusion which is remarkable even by the standards of Fleet Street and Westminster.

Although John Biffen has written to John Smith, the Opposition spokesman on industry, to say that he and the Department of Trade have acted on 'information and explanations provided by Times Newspapers . . . at the request of the Department's accountants', there appears to have been no direct contact between Biffen's officials and the Times Newspapers financial staff. Instead, all information about the condition of the newspapers has been passed to the government by executives and advisers of the Thomson group — who, because of their commitment to the Murdoch deal, have a solid motivation for suggesting that neither paper is a going concern.

ONE particular argument gives a flavour of the general style. Warburg's, the Thomson merchant bankers, will urge upon anyone prepared to listen that the *Sunday Times*'s vitality should be considered in the light of a £39 million loan which the Thomson group has made to Times Newspapers Ltd (TNL). Just suppose this money had been borrowed from a real-world bank, at real-world interest rates — the effect of this argument appears to work through in John Biffen's letter this week, explaining himself to his opposite number, John Smith:

> None of the foregoing figures made allowance for remuneration of capital, and . . . had they done so there would have been a substantially greater loss.

The phrase 'real world' (which comes readily to the lips of Thomson people these days) carries in this case especially resonant overtones. Of this £39 million, £16 million represents part of the losses accumulated on *The Times* since 1974 — the year when the Thomson family wearied of their one-time Monopolies Commission promise to bear all *Times* losses permanently, and decided to lumber TNL with some of them. The other £23 million derives from the cost of the abortive 1978 lockout. The Thomson group then considered itself wealthy enough to pay for that, though its connection with anything in the 'real world' always seemed highly tenuous. Not until very recently, when the appetite for 'going concern' arguments began, was any attempt made to portray these moneys as part of the basic *Sunday Times* capital structure.

Intrigue and confusion go well beyond questions of accountancy. Murdoch's representatives, in talks with the print unions, have demanded such formidable and immediate concessions from the workforce — 30 per cent staff cuts, and a wage-freeze until October 1982 — as to raise suspicions about whether the negotiations are being conducted in good faith. If they court, and indeed produce breakdown followed by closure of TNL, then Murdoch and News International will be in perfect shape to undertake lucrative raiding amid the ruins. 'I should think they've been through every book and filing-cabinet on the seventh floor', said one union official, 'and there can't be much worth knowing that they don't know'.

Further suspicion concentrates around the question of whether there was — whether there might have been — any credible alternative buyer for the *Sunday Times* as a separate entity. Or has the Thomson Organisation always been unshakeably determined to railroad Murdoch through? Here there is at least one fairly blunt conflict of interest.

Harold Evans, editor of the *Sunday Times*, says that the consortium bid which he and some associates assembled was never given any serious hearing, although it had £8 million finance available. (Murdoch's purchase price for both papers was only £14 million.) But James Evans, a senior Thomson director, says that the bid could not have been considered — even apart from Thomson's preference for a package deal — without some indication from Harold Evans about who was providing the finance. No information whatever, according to him, was provided.

AMID ALL THIS, the manual and clerical unions are not the only centres of resistance to the Murdoch/Thomson deal. The *Sunday Times* journalists, acting through their chapel (branch), have taken advice from Leonard Hoffman, QC, about challenging the lawfulness of John Biffen's decision to set aside a Monopolies Commission inquiry.

The situation is almost a replica of the continuing row in Australia over Murdoch's attempt to add a Melbourne television station to his existing TV interests in Sydney and elsewhere — thus creating the basis for a national network. Initially the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal, which is a regulatory body with powers very similar to the British Monopolies Commission, was remarkably complaisant about Murdoch's purchase of ATV-10 Melbourne. Its chairman decided that there was no reason to hear submissions from the Australian Labour Party and other groups about the social and political effects of further concentration of ownership in the media.

The Labour Party's lawyers then successfully sought from the Australian High Court a writ of mandamus against the Tribunal: effectively, a court order saying that the Tribunal had a statutory duty to conduct adequate investigations, and that this must be performed. The result in the first place was a reconstituted Tribunal, under a new chairman — whose inquiries soon showed that Murdoch had regarded the previous chairman more as a friendly adviser than an official regulator. Secondly, there was a freeze placed upon Murdoch's control of ATV-10 Melbourne after the Tribunal found his assurances on its independence unsatisfactory.

The *Sunday Times* journalists' likeliest course is also through mandamus, which is one of the ancient 'prerogative writs' — along with habeas corpus, certiorari and prohibition — under which the judges are supposed to discipline any government which acts unlawfully.

They suffer a minor difficulty in that the idea of using the courts to challenge governmental authority remains a fairly novel concept in contemporary Britain — indeed, it often troubles politicians of all parties. (In Australia, with a highly-formalised constitution, it is commonplace.) More serious is the problem of costs.

If the Thomson and Murdoch interests were to be joined in the action, and the case were to go right through the appeal system with a final decision against the journalists, they could face bills of £80,000 or more. (The chapel has well over 100 members.)

But the crux of the matter is that they must show that John Biffen acted unreasonably in

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deciding that the *Sunday Times* could not be treated independently as a 'going concern'. Here, their principal problem is not the law, but a diffuse and general bias of the British financial system, which conditions many of its operators against the basic idea of evaluating businesses as living organisms. On the contrary, the bias of the whole system is to think in terms of 'break-up' values: ie, the possible value of the corpse and any effects that may be found on it.

David Sainsbury has argued recently, in convincing detail* that this is one of the chief problems facing British industry as a whole. The 'going concern' approach requires industrial and commercial judgment of a kind which our bankers and civil servants are only rarely qualified to provide:

> Anyone with a limited amount of financial expertise can evaluate the balance sheet of a company. If need be an outside valuation can be obtained of the value of the assets. but when it comes to evaluating the cash flows of a business the industrial expertise becomes necessary.

The syndrome Sainsbury identifies is strikingly apparent in the letter which John Biffen produced this week in an attempt to answer his Parliamentary critics. He wrote to his Opposition shadow, John Smith, about his Department's treatment of information received from the Thomson group and the bankers, Warburg's:

> The basic figure in the Warburg document was the loss of £600,000 for 1980, estimated with the benefit of actual figures for the first 9 months (not 11 months as I mistakenly said in the House). After making adjustments which my Department's accountants and I thought proper, we arrived at a figure of £700,000.

All this means, of course, is that 'we added on £100,000 losses by way of guesswork'. No sensible account of these 'adjustments' has been provided.

But the 'Warburg's Document' — which was in fact the informal prospectus sent round to all would-be purchasers of TNL — presents some embarrassment for the case against the going concern. It was conceived, after all, as a *selling* document, and it suggests that the *Sunday Times* might be able to make a profit of just over £5 million in 1981. Biffen's letter goes on:

> As for future years, the basic Warburg figures were, I understand, prepared so as to indicate the range of 'the future profit potential' a prospective buyer might be able to attain, on certain major assumptions. Those figures were not held out to forecasts . . . Accordingly my Department's accountants considered these figures critical, and formed the view that in important respects those assumptions could not be relied on, *and therefore adjusted some of the Warburg figures substantially downward.* I agreed with them . . . (emphasis added)

Anyone who has been around the newspaper business knows that its economics are not very easy to predict (although easier than many to control, because large parts of its returns come in fairly quickly). It is, however, entirely implausible that there is an accountant in the Department of Trade who has any relevant experience whatever in predicting and assessing newspaper performance. The adjustment 'substantially downward' cannot have been made other than arbitrarily.

To look at the business for a moment through the eyes of its operators: the *Sunday Times* actually had a trading surplus of £3.6 million in the nine months to September 1980. This was more than wiped out by a £4.5 million contribution to group overheads — and reflected, anyway, a fairly unhappy trading period.

There was a very sharp turn-round in October, which produced substantial trading surpluses: October and November, anyway, are traditionally good months for the business. December, however, is bad, and taking the effect of group overheads, the *Sunday Times* finished the year with a loss of £166,000 — or about 0.3 per cent — on its £53 million turnover.

The first point to note is that this is something a very considerable distance away from the annual loss of £700,000 to which Mr Biffen was still adhering in his letter to John Smith *this week*. That was based, you will remember, on making a 12-month projection on the basis of nine lousy months, and adding an arbitrary £100,000 on top. Anyone even slightly experienced in projecting newspaper cash-flows would be aware of the possible need to adjust *upwards* for October/November: Biffen's accountants, in a perfect demonstration of Sainsbury's point, did exactly the opposite and got their sums 420 per cent wrong.

But there is another point. This *Sunday Times* result excluded any contribution from two important pieces of ancillary business.

SELECTIVE MARKET-PLACE is a Thomson-owned direct-selling operation which is based almost wholly upon the *Sunday Times*, and which makes about £200,000 a year. And the contract for printing the *Guardian* at Gray's Inn Road is worth £800,000, adding up to 'extras' of £11 million. As the marketing business and the weekday press capacity are both due to the presence of the *Sunday Times*, it would be reasonable to attribute at least £500,000 of that money to the paper.

In 'real world' terms, that would leave the *Sunday Times* with a 1980 profit — not loss — of £334,000, modest enough to be sure, but something wholly different from the world of John Biffen's officials, who are in fact roughly £1 million astray in their account.

Mr Biffen, who is nothing if not persistent, goes on to say that he has

> considered the possibility of the *Sunday Times* being treated as a wholly separate newspaper without any other newspaper contributing to (overhead & fixed) costs. It will be no surprise to you to learn that on this basis the position appeared even less favourable.

Where Biffen produces calculations, they are unsatisfactory: in this case he produces no more than the assertion, so one can hardly grapple with him. The argument, although wholly unquantified, presumably suggests that the *Sunday Times* can only be printed on the Gray's Inn Road plant, and that without the revenues of *The Times* the *Sunday Times* cannot support the overheads.

But this, once again, looks at the whole business in static terms, decorated with arbitrary guesswork. The facts of the real world are that the *Sunday Times'* £53 million turnover is alone worth purchasing for the £14 million that Murdoch has offered for the whole group.

Although Warburg's may well be over-sanguine in suggesting that the *Sunday Times* might make £5 million profit in 1981 — that depends, in fact, upon cost-savings that the unions have not yet agreed to — it is perfectly possible for the paper to make that order of profit through relatively minor adjustments in its business. It could, in other words, wipe out its purchase-price in three or four years, regardless of what happens to any other part of the group — and overheads, as anyone outside Whitehall knows, can always be trimmed down or disposed-of given a reasonable operating period.

Opposition spokesman Smith has, understandably, replied to Biffen saying that his answers will not do. Meanwhile, the *Sunday Times* journalists hope to get their legal action under way by the end of this week.

There will, in fact, be something more on trial than Rupert Murdoch, the Thomson Organisation and the integrity of the newspapers it has so grievously mishandled. The British business culture, and in particular its governmental legislators will be on trial. Biffen's lawyers will try to argue that he acted 'reasonably': that is, he came to conclusions which, whether right or wrong, a man might reasonably have come to.

But he only did so if one assumes that it was reasonable in him, as Secretary of State, to be almost wholly ignorant of the real nature of a going concern in the particular industry he was making decisions about. Traditionally, the law has always been hostile to defences based on ignorance. □

**Government and Industry: A New Partnership.* Fabian Research Series 347. David Sainsbury is Finance Director of J. Sainsbury and a member of the Docklands Joint Committee.

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GREECE

A vote for the old gang?

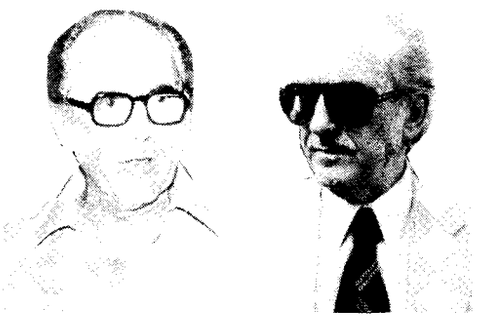
CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS reports on the Greek elections

GREECE has been governed by a right-wing monopoly for at least half a century. The methods of rule have varied, and have comprised many military dictatorships, long periods of gerrymandering and fraud, much meddling from the monarchy, and a fair bit of outside interference. For the last six years, however, the conservatives have managed to govern the country in a constitutional, democratic and republican fashion. There are many warts and shadows on this picture, but it is broadly fair and accurate. As a result, the general prediction of a socialist victory in this year's elections is almost certainly misleading.

This depressing conclusion rests on some equally unwelcome bits of analysis. For historical reasons, a 'Union of the Left' is not possible in Greece. Huge numbers of voters will have nothing to do with the Communist Party because of its role during the civil war. This makes an electoral pact with it very difficult if not actually impossible. Yet, since it was legalised in 1974, the pro-Moscow Communist Party of the Exterior has been increasing its voting strength and hopes to get well into double percentage figures this year. Most politicians, including Andreas Papandreou, believe that that will happen. But it puts Papandreou's own Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) in a rather awkward position.

He put it to me like this: an alliance with the Communists would gravely reduce PASOK's appeal to the centre-left (once itself dominated by Papandreou's father, and still a force to be reckoned with). While, conversely, an alliance with the centre-Left would mean watering the socialist wine and risking defections of PASOK voters to the Communists. So there may be four or five parties, all claiming the banner of 'socialism', all fighting the election on their own.

This rather tedious psephology conceals other problems on the Greek Left. The chief one is the issue of Europe. Opinion polls have consistently shown a guarded majority in favour of membership, but the socialist forces are not unanimous on the argument. The Moscow Communists are unconditionally opposed to the accession. The small but respected Eurocommunists, led by resistance hero Leonidas Kyrkos, are in favour of the principle of membership but critical of the terms and conditions. The social democratic parties (of which, for students of modern revisionism, there are three) are all in favour. PASOK has pursued a wavering and unconvincing line, first asking for a Norwegian-type association with the EEC and then, suddenly realising that Norway is not an agricultural country, demanding a Yugoslav-style agreement instead.



Papandreou the informal hero (left). On the right is his new, statesman-like image.

It is true that Yugoslavia has just negotiated a favourable deal for itself, but that deal can be rescinded by Brussels at any time. And, as Leonidas Kyrkos points out, Yugoslavia has a socialistic internal system which Greece, not to put too fine a point upon it, has not. It's thus not surprising that about one third of PASOK voters turn out, when confronted by opinion polls, to favour Greek membership of the Community. This is *despite* the many disadvantages of the Greek accession; the transition period for agrarian produce is far too long and Greek workers in Europe will not enjoy parity of rights for a scandalous seven years.

In its anxiety to become a national party, PASOK has also fudged the question of social ownership. On some days, it speaks of nationalising insurance. On other days, it circularises insurance companies and says that public ownership is only a distant goal and that the rights of property will be upheld. It calls for strong trade unions but puts itself forward as the party of the small businessman. It tries, more successfully, to combine populist appeals about NATO with nationalist rhetoric about the Turks. This goes down well with the public, because of Turkey's threatening posture in the Aegean. But, by stressing national defence and national unity, it also reminds voters that there is a danger and paradoxically makes them more nervous about a sharp change of government.

In 1974 Constantine Karamanlis swept his 'New Democracy' party to power on the whispered but virulent slogan 'Karamanlis or the tanks'. The implication was clearer than the intent — the country would be back in the melting pot of violence and bankruptcy without the stabilising hand of the Right. No such crude formula would work today, but Greeks are still very nervous of sudden lurches and with Reagan and Haig on the horizon may not vote to displease them. Andreas Papandreou seems to be aware of all this, but he cannot trim too much without losing his militant followers. Above all, he must not end up like Allende and infuriate the Right while failing to satisfy the Left.

On foreign policy also, some of the clothes of the socialists have been stolen. Under Karamanlis and Rallis an active Balkan policy has been followed, healing old disputes with Bulgaria and taking a more Gaullist attitude towards the Warsaw Pact countries in general. Indeed, the strategy can be seen as a Balkan and European one, counter-posing the EEC and the neighbouring countries to the traditional conservative axis of NATO and Washington. The Left would say correctly that this is not true 'non-alignment', but it is still an advance on the past.

This irony will intensify its effect as the year wears on. PASOK claims, not without justification, to be the most vigilant and radical party on the question of Cyprus. But the Cypriots will vote some time before the Greeks do, and they will certainly vote for politicians of the moderate centre (one includes the Communists in that definition; like their Greek counterparts they are extremely loyal to Moscow, and the Russians are quite happy with a stalemate on NATO's home ground). Thus the Establishment will be able to say that it is at one with the struggling Cypriots and that it is 'irresponsible' for PASOK to demand more than they do.

IN MANY WAYS, Greek political life resembles that of France. The national emblems and anthems and slogans all celebrate a history of resistance and revolution. There are memories of sharp and bitter class conflicts. Left opposition parties always do well in the midlife period of conservative governments. But on the day, the citizens are easily swayed by considerations of 'security', 'prosperity' and 'stability'. The typical Greek voter is the *noikokyris;* the staunch petit-bourgeois and paterfamilias, who is the backbone of the nation and the lifeblood of the black economy. He and his wife will cheer Papandreou and his stirring speeches, and then slip off to vote for the old gang.

This may seem a cynical and weary conclusion. There is certainly a great thirst for change in Greece, which will reflect itself in an increased Left vote. But, in its effort to sustain forward momentum, the Left has alienated and confused a large number of voters. On the issue of Europe it has contradicted itself publicly. On the issue of nationalisation it has called for too much and too little — bearing in mind that state control has meant party control in the past, and that many Greeks suspect it of being corrupt and inefficient.

Amid this confusion, the Right has been able to reform itself and escape the discredit and shame of the junta years. It has, for the first time in a generation, been able to pose as the defender of Greek sovereignty and independence. By adroit shuffling on NATO and the Common Market, and with a hint of chauvinism here and there, it can always take 'an initiative' which seems plausible and popular. Nor should one forget the extreme Right — Papandreou is sceptical about the revival of 'dirty tricks', but it does not take government sponsorship to make 'anarchist' bomb outrages tell against the Left as they did last December. Finally, it is almost certain that voters under eighteen, and Greek workers abroad, will not have the franchise. In more desperate or less complicated surroundings the Left might have a fighting chance. But not this time. □

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OPINION

Who needs polls?

Most attacks on opinion polls come from people with no direct knowledge of survey research. CONRAD JAMESON, however, is a member of the pollsters' club, the Market Research Society, and runs his own survey research company. He argues here that most poll figures are worthless.

'AS EVERY opinion poll for the past 30 years has shown,' trumpeted the *Sunday Times*, furious at the leftward turn of the Labour Party at the Conference last October, 'the vast majority of Labour supporters want moderate policies.' If anything, the *Sunday Times* understates the case. The polls show Labour supporters lining up, not with the 'moderate' policies of their own party, but the immoderate policies of Margaret Thatcher. And even if they cannot bring themselves to vote Tory, a rash of polls in the last fortnight appears to suggest that many would back a 'Centre' party. So do opinion polls prove that leftish policies would be given the thumbs down by the electorate?

The answer is no. They prove nothing of the sort. Nor do they prove that leftish policies would be popular. What then do they prove? The answer is that they prove nothing one way or the other. The testimony of opinion polls is unreliable — and not just the testimony of this or that opinion poll, mind, but *any* opinion poll. All opinion polls are bad. If socialists are not to be bamboozled by opinion poll evidence it is important they know why.

Morally speaking, opinion polls are always an embarrassment. Touted as representing public opinion, they in fact represent only private or mass opinion: opinion taken in the dark of the doorway rather than in the open light of the forum; opinion that chokes off the opportunity to hear out arguments pro and con, to consult a neighbour, to read up, to ask a question, to answer back; opinion so half-hearted it is hard to take seriously.

If I vote in an election or referendum I must come away from my house — a small act perhaps but enough to underscore a responsibility and commitment. But if I answer an opinion poll questionnaire my commitment, if there is commitment at all, is likely to be trivialised to the level of a preference for a brand of pears or suntan lotions — which is in fact the actual context of most opinion polls, as they are tacked-on questions to consumer surveys.

Not many, to be sure, would go along with the proposal of George Gallup to a Congressional Committee that opinion polls should take the place of free elections. But that is not to say many a good democrat isn't secretly convinced that opinion polls are an essential tool of the democratic decision-maker.

But can the opinion polls give a reasonably accurate reading of grass roots opinion? In even the best-conducted opinion poll there is no way to be so much as half-way sure about so basic a question as what the subject is about. An opinion poll among Glasgow council tenants in high rise flats showed 91 per cent of them satisfied. Puzzled by such astonishing contentment, sociologist Pearl Jephcott personally interviewed council tenants. She found that what residents meant by satisfaction was that they had a roof over their heads that didn't leak, or that they were glad to get out from their in-laws or find a flat they could afford, or

Party's election chances damaged, says 75 per cent

Poll shows that Wembley has undermined Labour

Shock for Tories in centre poll

New party could sweep to power

'Centre' provides poll threat to Tories

EXCLUSIVE

by ANTHONY KING

simply that they were self-respecting and respectable. As for high-rise flats, no, these were dreadful. An opinion poll on satisfaction has a special methodological problem: satisfaction is such a powerful vacuum cleaner it sucks up satisfaction from unrelated sources and tends to give a bloated score.

The basic methodological problem — asking one question but getting the answer to another — is endemic. Take a light-hearted example quoted by Peter Kellner (*NS* 26.9.80): a poll showing a majority of four to one against Prince Charles and Princess Anne going fox hunting. The topic of the opinion poll couldn't be more specific in naming names. But are we really sure that the poll shows what it seems to show? It could show popular disapproval, not of fox-hunting, but of the royal family — of which there is a great deal unreported by the press. On the other hand, the poll could show the opposite in proving that Prince Charles and Princess Anne are highly popular. Their fox-hunting could be rejected as an aristocratic sport that distances them from the people. Choose whichever interpretation you like.

OPINION POLLS not only obscure the subject of their questions. They also obscure the answers. 'Most trade unionists back the right to sue over picketing,' ran a recent headline in *The Times*. By the second paragraph the policy implication is already clear. The poll is 'likely to reinforce the view of Ministers that they have a mandate for the Employment Bill and its accompanying codes.' But is this policy implication correct? Assume for the moment that the poll is actually about what it says it is about, secondary picketing, and not something else — a whopping assumption, need it be said: the real subject might be, not secondary picketing, but union bashing or, even more likely, the slap of firm government.

Moreover, are we dealing with a deep-set commitment or a fly-by-night mood? Or are they like the Polish workers before the strikes at Gdansk who, roused by injustice, would be willing participants of sympathetic strikes across the country? Interpret it as you will.

By its nature an opinion poll takes manifest demand as read. And that is the problem. You never know what change of circumstance will bring a latent demand to the surface. Can you find out by the simple device favoured by pollsters themselves: tracking an opinion over time by repeating the same poll? Do one opinion poll or do a dozen and you are still left with an each-way, no-way bet. For even if opinion stays fairly constant you still have to reckon with a quite real possibility that what keeps it so is not commitment but simply lack of disturbance.

Just how dangerously misleading opinion polls can be I had a chance to discover for myself during the controversy that surrounded Harold Wilson's 'In Place of Strife'. The published opinion polls at the time were showing a steady majority in favour of the Bill of roughly four-to-one. Curious about what views and feelings might be hidden underneath this majority, the *Observer* asked my firm to do what we called an 'anti' opinion poll: that is, we cross-examined responses rather than took them as read.

We too found the same four-to-one support but we also found that: (a) hardly half the country could identify a single item in the Bill and only 15 per cent could identify two items; (b) while an expected majority wanted to outlaw wildcat strikes, half of this majority wanted *all* strikes outlawed; (c) a majority thought the country in a state of national emergency; (d) opinion was at such sixes and sevens it was impossible to read a mandate even for specific measures.

THIS last item was the most revealing. A majority wanted a government-imposed cooling off period — but a majority *also* agreed that labour and management should resolve their difficulties without government intervention. A majority thought that strikes were justified because workers weren't getting their fair share or keeping up with inflation — but 70 per cent also agreed that strikes were caused mainly by agitators and communists.

Our *Observer* 'anti' poll, note, was entirely unoriginal in its research technique. We used standard cross-examination techniques of social and market research for sorting out reason from rationalisation, conscious from unconscious desire, what people say from what they really mean. But if the techniques are so standard, why aren't they used in conventional opinion polls?

The cynical answer — that cross examination surveys would fail to beget the clear-cut headlines the media want — has some truth to it but doesn't go far enough. The deeper answer is that the very idea of an opinion poll as it is now conceived forbids the researcher to look underneath the findings. An opinion poll, remember, is a simulation of a real life referendum. Its business is to establish a popular mandate. From the pollster's point of view, we have no more right to cross-examine respondents than would an election official at the last Common Market referendum. One person, one vote. And that vote is sacrosanct.

Now all good socialists know instinctively that opinion polls are used against us. But here is a mystery. Why do we still befriend them? One reason is that we don't. We befriend a survey that looks like an opinion poll. The mistake is understandable. By a popular misuse of the term, an opinion poll is synonymous with any short survey. It is not. A survey asking how you would vote if there were an election tomorrow is a poll about voting intention. Unlike the opinion poll, you can check its performance by

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its eve-of-election forecast. But you cannot check the performance of an opinion poll — a point which is conveniently forgotten when the two types of polls are bracketed together.

Nor is an opinion poll like a brief attitude survey that asks, say, whether you are more worried about inflation than you are about unemployment. This short survey can also suffer distortions but the risk is considerably less. The subject of the question is likely to be decipherable; so is the answer. After all, we know more about our worries than we do about secondary picketing.

Nor is an opinion poll like the brief survey of leaders and issues used by political parties during election campaigns. Here the technique is much the same as a conventional opinion poll but the purpose is radically different. The political party isn't trying to discover a mandate but simply to check its own communication. Has a message been received, is it convincing, which issues and leadership characteristics appeal most to which target groups — these are the practical qustions asked by political communications surveys. These questions are entirely legitimate. By a slight elision of definitions, however, published opinion polls also become legitimate for no other reason than that they ask similar questions.

We socialists also befriend the opinion poll for a more gallant reason: we are secretly convinced that, crook though it is, it might yet be redeemed. It is the despicable poll that makes reform so tempting. The British Road Federation once devised a poll to show that Londoners wanted more urban motorways. Cooking the results was easy enough. The poll had only to ask a yes/no question. Respondents were thus forced to choose between getting something they could conceivably enjoy and getting nothing at all. Peter Willmott and Michael Young stepped in on the side of the angels and launched an opinion poll of their own. This poll offered alternative forms of government expenditure. Lo, help for the elderly came first while more urban motorways came last.

Willmott and Young fell for the temptation of reform. Indeed they fell so hard they quite forgot research protocol. They had neglected to rotate the list of alternatives. More help for the elderly was in the first position — and the first position, like the second least expensive wine, is known to be favoured. They had also stacked the cards against urban motorways by offering three types of transport expenditure but only one for the social services and housing — tantamount to forcing Tories to split their vote by fielding three candidates per constituency.

But we are turning a blind eye to the most important reason of all, this one rather less than gallant. We befriend opinion polls because they come out on our side in telling us what we want to hear. And which side is our side? The Right side of course. There is no doubt about that. It was Mark Abrams who first persuaded the Labour Party that opinion polls are the thing. In his seminal *Must Labour Lose?* he argued that opinion polls gave a clear verdict: growing worker affluence meant a growing *embourgeoisiement;* which, to come to the point, meant growing alienation from Labour.

Several studies challenged the thesis and eventually overthrew it — most importantly *The Affluent Worker* by John Goldthorpe et al, which found affluent workers taking a what's-in-it-for-me approach to politics but still holding in the main to traditional class-based political loyalties. But the refutations came too late. For Abrams the world was moving towards the Butskellite lib-lab centre where stood not only

Abrams himself but, as chance would have it, Harold Wilson as well. It was a true marriage of minds. During the Sixties the opinion pollster was a member of Wilson's kitchen cabinet. By the Seventies, he had become an official appointee of the National Executive.

PART OF the explanation behind official acceptance — the nice part — is that opinion polling is thought of largely as an election-time exercise for guiding communication — say, which issues to stress in a marginal seat. But part of the explanation is that the Labour Party is naive. In lumping together all types of polling, it has assumed that one type is as harmless as the next, including, incidentally, opinion polls commissioned, not by the Labour Party, but by the press.

This is a mistake. The opinion poll proper has built into its techniques a deep conservative bias — or, perhaps more exactly, a bias towards the status quo since it shows opinion to be on the side of authority, as Bertrand Russell once said about *The Times,* wherever it might be found. When the campaign in support of General Douglas MacArthur first started, the public was unmoved and incredulous. After a media campaign in support of MacArthur, the public came around — at which point, of course, the media could quote the opinion polls as showing popular support.

What is said in defence of opinion polls is not that they tell politicians what people want, still less that they tell politicians what to do. The real defence of opinion polls is at once more subtle and appealing. We live in a mass democracy broken up into a wearying number of publics, some articulate and organised, some inarticulate and not at all organised. The one set of publics will have no trouble making known its views. But what about the other set of publics?

The defence is nonsense, and the more dangerous in pretending to protect the underdog when it is in truth the underdog who is betrayed. The alternative to bad research isn't no research, as the defence implies, but better research. The need for disciplined feedback remains but should be redirected so as to be acceptable to the socialist conscience or, for that matter, to anyone who is politically committed and is not ashamed to say so. The researcher shouldn't be asked to find out what people want — as if people knew or could tell you if they did! — but to find out *how people can be persuaded to want what you want them to want.* The research follows, rather than precedes, the policy.

Putting the policy objective first doesn't mean that the policy is never changed in the light of the findings. On the contrary. The research simulates, not a referendum as does an opinion poll, but a give and take argument: if you keep on trying experiments in persuading people and they can continue to fail, then plainly that policy needs reconsidering — possibly in its content, most certainly in its timing.

IRONICALLY, an interventionist, what-can-people-be-persuaded-to-want approach, for all its apparent partisanship, gives at least the hope of a scientific procedure. The approach allows a double opportunity for rigorous testing. The one is by cross-examination. There is no need whatsoever for researchers to take either the respondent's understanding of a question or their manifest demands at face value. Why should they if they aren't using a survey as a referendum? The other is by experiment. Different communications can be tried out in matched samples — a procedure that is as strong in theory as it is in practice: in an experiment, variables can be effectively isolated by artificial manipulation to discover which variable changes what.

And even more ironically, partisan research would be incomparably fairer to all sections of the Labour Party. As things stand now, the Right of the Labour Party is keeper of the social scientific mysteries. Those in the Centre or Left who look suspiciously on opinion polls are presumed to be intellectual Luddites or case-hardened fanatics indifferent to public opinion in any case. Why else would they be so hostile? But once the partisan nature of political research is recognised, the question of bias is forced into the open.

Once a legitimate role is found for partisan research, then it is easy to find a general place for non-partisan research as well. That place is not with the commercial opinion poll. That place is with a research institute — or, at any rate, with researchers who aren't tied to the demands of an astonish-the-natives headline.

Now that we know — or think we know — that 30 to 50 per cent might vote for a Social Democratic-Liberal alliance, shouldn't we find out some of the things the commercial polls fail to tell us? Are these people deeply disaffected — or only fickle and confused? And what is on their minds: are the Labour 'defectors', for example, frightened of Labour policies — or only frightened Labour won't follow them through?

A survey on tinned pears or suntan lotions will take 35 to 40 minutes; yet a widely-publicised poll on realignments in British politics may take just four or five minutes. Why must we fig-leaf the true character of an opinion poll? It is often only another name for a cheap-jack survey. And it shows. □

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HYGIENE

Unfresh flesh

BARRY WILSON on the lessons of the knacker-meat scandal

'WATCH OUT. Now the balloon is really going up.' That is the reaction of Hammersmith & Fulham's EHO (Environmental Health Officer), Geoffrey Fish, to the police raid on Anthony Animal Products just before Christmas.

It's now clear that the knackermeat trade — diversion of dead and diseased carcases into processed human food — is very widespread. Further, these dangerous products are often finding their way into hard-hit school meal programmes.

The recent public disclaimer by Walls doesn't suggest to knowledgeable people that the issue will go away. Too many big food companies have lately turned a blind eye to knackermeat risks: much present background noise is the sound of important fellows running for cover.

The EHOs, and their politically-active staff association, are trying to make big capital from their Fulham success story: and will do so again in Leics/Beds/Herts where the next case comes up.

Defendants in the Fulham case, Graham Anthony and his uncle John, are out on £20,000 bail pending a hearing later this month. The Leicester case, which is quite separate, concerns meat traders Mason, Fletcher & East, who are alleged to have contravened meat-inspection regulations.

ANTHONY'S partner, Graham Vaughan, claims to have known nothing about the sources of meat reaching the Fulham premises, and this sort of disclaimer will be heard more and more frequently over coming months. But the EHOs themselves, whatever their present energy, are not blameless.

It was as long ago as May 1980 that the first evidence of the scandal appeared in South Bedfordshire. The local EHO circularised his colleagues in an attempt to see whether the incident was isolated — and was rewarded with a chorus of complaints about the implication for their professional integrity.

That has always been a slightly fragile flower. Vets from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) have long pointed out that their inspection of imported meat is far more stringent than the EHOs' regulation of domestic production. And the EEC Commission has said that it is rather less than happy with British meat-inspection services: so much for Britain's hygienic reputation.

THE FACT that EHOs are employed by local authorities can be inhibiting. One told an East Anglian vet that he had doubts over the local abattoir, but couldn't act because it was run by a councillor. Clear need exists for a unified, professional inspection system, backed by new regulations: and this week senior EHOs are to meet MAFF officials and explain how impossible it is to enforce present regulations without full-scale CID assistance.

Meat in Britain can be shipped around with considerable abandon. Recent checks have found some batches changing hands six or seven times within Smithfields (tax evasion is one motivation), and EHOs say it is nearly impossible to say which meat comes from dead or condemned carcases. Why are these not compulsorily stained at the initial butchering point?

Agriculture Minister Peter Walker shows no enthusiasm for action, and farm opinion isn't exactly unhappy. Dead cattle used to be worth £10-12 per carcase as pet food: lately, farmers have been offered as much as £60-70. Although not a high price by fresh meat standards, it is far too dear for pet food.

The EHOs' association is about to launch a national campaign under the slogan Operation Meathook. Long ago, the novelist Upton Sinclair showed that the meat trade was a promising area for villainy, and several decades later his perception remains uncomfortably accurate. □

Diary

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

■It is considered to be irony of a sort that John Biffen, widely touted as an apostle of the free market, should be the instrument of a monopolistic carve-up in Fleet Street. In fact, since the 'free market' leads ineluctably to monopoly and concentration, I fail to see the contradiction. In any case, the real author of the Murdoch sell-out is Margaret Thatcher. All Prime Ministers eventually come to the conclusion that the 'media' are against them, and she has come to this paranoid's terminus earlier than most. I learn from Downing Street that she attaches great importance to Rupert's takeover, and considers it a necessary counterweight to leftist bias elsewhere. To *what* elsewhere, I hear you ask? To leftist bias, that's what. The Prime Minister thinks there is a pattern in the appointment of Edmund Dell to head the new fourth channel, and in the success of Peter Jay in the 'breakfast television' franchise tussle. They might not look very radical to you and me, but to her they look like creeping socialism. So Rupert *shall* have his *Times*.

■On Sunday the *Observer* carried a spirited piece by Conor Cruise O'Brien attacking the Tory collusion with Murdoch. It also carried (1) A cheery front page report on the prospects for a centre party, which referred to Mrs Williams as 'Shirley' in the headline. (2) A cheery front page analysis of possible voter support for such a party written by Shirley Williams's ex-boyfriend Anthony King. (3) A cheery review of David Owen's new book *Face the Future*, which occupied all the plum inches on the centre page and was written by Roy Jenkins. (He liked Owen's book *a lot*.) Now, I spend a lot of time arguing with comrades on the Left that while Fleet Street is heavily loaded towards the Tories, it is not actually a conspiracy. I don't think those three *Observer* features were a conspiracy. But picture if you will an upbeat story about Benn on the front page, flanked with some favourable statistics produced by his wife, and accompanied by a review of *Arguments for Socialism* written by Stuart Holland. *That* would need a conspiracy. So would calling him 'Tony' in a headline.

■Some people really work at growing into their nicknames; at living up to them as well. How wonderful, for instance, that Michael Foot should be officially known as the Caretaker. With his shambling and babbling and his gift for the *non sequitur*, he should have been cast by Pinter long ago:

> I said to this monk, here, I said . . . . you haven't got a pair of shoes have you, a pair of shoes, I said, enough to keep me on my way . . . . Piss off, he said to me.

Or, and arguably better still:

> Shirts like these don't go far in the winter time. I mean that's one thing I know for a fact. No, what I need, is a kind of a shirt with stripes, a good solid shirt, with stripes going down.

In the convenience. Well, he was in the convenience. Run about the best convenience they had . . .

■I have no objection to Paul Johnson writing a fatuous potboiler on the Irish question entitled *Ireland: Land of Troubles*. But if I had sweated my guts out producing the Thames TV *Troubles* series, I would object to Johnson suggesting or implying that we were a team. This seems to be what has happened. In October last (to cite only one occasion), Johnson was interviewed on Ulster Television about his own negligible book and asked why he had written it. He replied:

> Well, the initial motive was that Thames TV are producing this big series and they asked me to produce a book to accompany it.

Oh no, they didn't. Instead, they have produced a far superior volume of their own, *The Troubles*, edited by Taylor Downing and published by Thames/Futura at £4.95 (two quid cheaper than Johnson's little effort). The echo of Thames's title should fool nobody. In any case, they would never dedicate a book, as Johnson has done 'To Tom Cassidy, Entrepreneur and Master of Hounds.'

■Those of us who drone on remorselessly about the need for Britain and British Labour to adopt a 'European perspective' are prone to overlook one apparently minor anomaly. There is one European state with which Britain does not even have diplomatic relations. Albania is not everybody's favourite country (I think it could be said, for example, that it has a human rights record second to none). But are we not told every other day by the Foreign Office that *de facto* control is the only serious criterion for relations? The reason for the original breach was a dubious incident in the Corfu Channel in 1946, when British warships struck mines which, they claimed, had been laid by the perfidious Albanians. Albania denied responsibility and Britain therefore confiscated the Albanian gold reserves which had originally been looted by the Nazis. In the last few months the FO has been hinting that relations might be restored without Albania paying the remaining

Roger Woddis

Royal blue

'The state of present world tension and the arms race is largely the creation of Soviet military aggression and interference in countries all over the world.' — Prince Philip.

Speak out, O frank and fearless Prince,
Though less exalted spokesmen wince!
While others are beset with doubt,
You get your ducal finger out!

O how it warms the common heart
To know that you don't give a fart!
We honour and salute you, Sir,
O noble Nuke of Edinburgh!

No axe to grind, above the fray,
No purpose but to earn your pay,
You flatten with a single blow
The architect of all our woe!

No other cause of strife exists
But Russian guile and Russian fists;
No crime that others may commit
Has anything to do with it.

Let timid souls express concern
That you were speaking out of turn;
You know, when all is said and done,
Which side your bread is buttered on.

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compensation. That would be a welcome and overdue recognition — after all, the British government did once try to overthrow the Albanian government by force. The plan misfired, if only because the man put in charge of liaising between SIS and the CIA was Kim Philby.

■Here is a news item from the grey, humourless, collectivist future. A corking new Indian restaurant has opened in Drury Lane. It is called *The Last Days of the Raj*, and combines excellent food and good service with a complete absence of servility. It is run by a cooperative of mainly Bengali workers, with others from India and from Nepal. All of them share in decision making, and all of them are open to new ideas for the menu. They have been helped in their launch by Camden Council, whose job creation scheme has secured the loan on which they opened. It is very good to see employment opportunities going to minorities like this, and one waves with a clearer conscience for that last thoughtful carafe before resuming post-prandial duties. I always did want to be a restaurant critic, and the Last Quango in Camden seems a good place to start.

■I've had some donations for Stanley Adams since my appeal last week. These should be sent to 40 Doughty Street, London WC1.

■On 23 January I reported Colonel Ghaddaffi's stirring call for a rethink about the historical guilt of Adolf Hitler. I invited Vanessa Redgrave and her associates to say where they stood on this latest declaration by their ally. I didn't have to wait long. This office has received nothing by way of reply, but the newspaper of the Workers Revolutionary Party has given me a few thousand words of dressing down. 'Hitchens, who has a public schoolboy's hatred of the working class . . . . eschews all political labels so that he can mingle with Tories, Labourites, Liberals and his connections with the anti-Trotskyite revisionists (sic)'. I am also called 'a brainwashed liar from Oxford University'. The *New Statesman* is referred to as 'this erratic undergraduates' publication'. Education, as you can see, is a powerful influence on the mind of Alex Mitchell (who wrote the stuff). I still haven't had an answer to my question apart from some evasive talk about 'context'. Where did Vanessa Redgrave go to school?

This England

£3 book tokens for entries printed. (On postcard, please.)

☐ A one-legged burglar with a glass eye and a deformed hand was advised to retire by a judge yesterday. Mr Rodney Percy, the York Crown Recorder, told 46-year-old Philip McCutcheon: 'You are a rotten burglar.' — *Daily Telegraph* (Peter Lack)

☐ The Salvation Army opened a soup kitchen this week in a town where traditional school meals are being scrapped. Pupils from schools in Crowland, Lincs, queued for soup and a roll for 10p. — *Times Educational Supplement* (John Filer)

☐ The continued publication of *The Times* newspaper is among favours being sought through the intercession of Cardinal Newman. — *The Universe* (Martin Symons)

☐ Magistrates at Chorley yesterday refused to hear a case because the defendant appeared in court in a yellow-and-green hooped jersey and green gloves. — *Daily Telegraph* (I.G.James)

Breakfast dishes

Arthur Marshall

SOME OF US who are, as the frogs, with a sensitivity and tact that make one think that there may after all be something recommendable that I have hitherto overlooked in our neighbours, phrase it, 'of a certain age', tend to live largely in the past, the present holding little that is in any way comforting or reassuring (aside, natch, from Our Leader), and the future ('Did you hear that odd sort of bang, Ethel?') being, in the view of many, ominous. Not in my view though. Thirty years ago and night after night at Drury Lane, Mary Martin informed those present for *South Pacific* that she was a cock-eyed optimist. Ditto. Even double ditto. And many years before that, dear Dorothy Dickson begged us, at the Winter Garden, to look for the silver lining. Well, why not give it a whirl?

However, I must say that when the hostage crisis was recently at its horrid height and when one was entertaining unchristian thoughts about almost everybody east of Suez, I did dig about in Memory's Treasure-Chest for something cheering and came up with what was, for me and my simple tastes in comic material, a small nugget of pleasure. It occurred in a film, name forgotten, about 25 years ago and written, I think, by the skilful pens of Adolph Green and Betty Comden, in which a new American breakfast cereal was being offered in a television advertisement to the public. Its name was SOGGO and the TV announcer, unveiling its merits, said 'Introducing to you SOGGO, the new breakfast food. SOGGO doesn't pop or crackle or crunch. SOGGO does nothing at all but just sit in the bottom of the bowl and sog up the milk.'

SOGGO seems to me to be the ideal and undemanding nutritional accompaniment for our forthcoming breakfast television, allowing itself to be spooned up effortlessly while the spooner's eyes are fully occupied with the visual treats to be offered us by all those jolly sponsoring faces, and heavens how cheerily and understandably they all smiled after selection, responsible for this exciting innovation which promises the kind of intellectual and early morning mental stimulus that the country has been yearning for. I am of course rearranging the whole internal lay-out of 'Myrtlebank' to facilitate maximum viewing at kedgeree-time, and a 'dinette alcove' upholstered in a boldly coloured luxi-pile acrylic in the telly room is the obvious answer, with a new serving hatch and a full range of 'Hostess' hot plates. Menus too are being adjusted, for nobody sensible wants to be coping with a bony kipper, however tasty, while there is anything at all to view.

Those who hardly know how to get through the rest of the day while waiting eagerly for the next episode of 'Crossroads' (the dusting last week of Chalet 9 by that new chalet maid, Iris, can only be described as skimpy and woefully superficial, but then of course she has other things on her mind) must be full of hope that room in the breakfast schedules will be found for yet another soap opera of a lightish kind. I see it as being probably a suburban saga featuring a family called, let us say, the Follicles, with Mr and Mrs Follicle, their three lovely kiddies, Dawn, Dean and Gail, and, to show their social status somewhere in the lower middles, a funny daily ('It's high time I gave your old what-not a good rub'). Gail, aged twelve and constantly referred to as being 'a thorough little madam', attempts to slink off to school in high heels and heavy make-up ('Now you just listen to me my girl') and Mr Follicle, bowler-hatted senior clerk at Hoggit and Bumfield, commutes to the City and, to create suspense and unease, has a non-fatal heart attack (well, the series has only just begun) while running for the 8.42 ('Honestly, Syl, we all thought we'd lost him'). Meanwhile, Dawn's application to join the tennis club ('But why, Mum, why?') has been turned down (suspense again), Mrs Follicle has started having driving lessons ('Mr Plenderleith only screamed twice this morning'), a crotchety old grandmother ('Where's my Horlicks?') comes to stay, and Dean's acne worsens ('It's just your time of life, old son'). How's that for a lively start? It could be billed as 'Have Fun with the Follicles' and I make you a present of it. I don't need it back.

Opinions in our Devon village of Appleton concerning the desirability or otherwise of breakfast telly are extremely varied. There are of course those who will switch on automatically to anything and everything the long day through. The Bultitudes have three television sets, one each in the drawing-room, sun-room-cum-loggia and rumpus room (ping-pong table and dart board) and their only known view of the matter was a hearty 'Good show, chaps!' from Giles, a complimentary comment which in that undemanding and supremely extrovert household is in fairly general use to express approval. Canon and Mrs Mountjoy do not have a television set as far as I know unless there be one in their bedroom, which I feel to be improbable as the idea of Berenice, after devout bedside prayers, switching on for a late night repeat of Sergeant Bilko is an unlikely one. Miss Entwhistle, an early riser, is in favour. Mrs Hooper is against the whole thing ('Quite enough rubbish as it is') and here of course she puts her finger right on the trouble. Quantity. The simple rule must surely be clear to all that the greater the output, the lower the standard. Those who have subjected themselves to the full horror of the more or less round the clock American television and the apparently limitless number of stations involved, will know this only too well. I regard the introduction here of a new channel with the utmost despondency. It will mean more dread hours to fill and it will inevitably lead, whatever the authorities may say, to more competition, and the results of the death struggle between BBC 1 and ITV are there for all to see and ponder on. The remarkable improvement over the last few years in technicalities (the colour alone is a miracle) and television reception merely make more obvious the thinness of much that is shown. There just isn't enough worthwhile stuff, and who could possibly expect there to be, to fill the empty slots. And so perhaps, second thoughts being often better than first, I'll abandon my dinette alcove and cancel the order for SOGGO and just settle instead at breakfast for the *Times* (and what a relief to be able to type that word) crossword. Let's see now. 7 across. 'Can be picked in the garden'. Four letters and ending in -ose. 'Nose' would you think? □

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LETTERS

One person, one vote: a stale red herring?

From Rt Hon. Michael Foot MP

Perhaps you will permit me to say a few words in defence of Keir Hardie, particularly since your political editor, Peter Kellner (*NS* 30 January), appears to have swallowed holus-bolus the insidious, anti-Hardie, anti-suffragette arguments which were accepted by many anti-feminists at the time and have been adopted by anti-feminist historians since.

Just how misleading his arguments are may at first be illustrated by this quotation from an article written in that same year of 1907 when the Labour Party Conference discussed this issue, a quotation from Eva Gore-Booth writing on behalf of the Lancashire and Cheshire Women Textile and other Workers Representation Committee. She wrote (and she might prophetically have had Peter Kellner in mind): '. . . it is no exaggeration to say that among the more progressive workers there has grown up a deep feeling of bitterness and disappointment, a feeling which culminated this year when the Labour Party, led away by a theoretic inclination for the very stale red-herring of immediate complete and entire adult suffrage, refused to fulfil their written pledge and press forward a measure for the enfranchisement of women. It is apparently a very easy matter for men to muddle the issues with high-sounding protests against the terms of their own enfranchisement, a measure by which they do not themselves refuse to profit. Their position is absolutely indefensible. They have built up the whole of the Labour Party on what they are pleased to call a property qualification, a qualification that gives votes to houses and lodgings, not to flesh and blood, a qualification that, according to their own often repeated statements, no democratic person could accept, or even compromise with as a temporary instalment of justice. If what these Labour men say is true, then it follows that the Labour Party is built in sin and founded on unrighteousness.'

However, the first leader of the Labour Party, I'm glad to say, was not prepared to indulge in such hypocrisy, and it is hard indeed that he should be posthumously reprimanded for his pains. Of course it is true that there was an argument, and, on the part of some, no doubt, a genuine argument about the so-called property vote which prevailed at the time. Of course most Labour supporters, headed by Keir Hardie, wanted to do away with property qualifications altogether; but that was not a reason, as Keir Hardie insisted, for refusing to support the next essential step forward in the enfranchisement of women.

At that 1907 Conference the Woolwich Trades Council submitted a resolution for the immediate extension of votes for women 'on the same conditions as men'. That is what Hardie supported as the best next step forward, and some at least of those who opposed him, on the grounds that they could not soil their hands by supporting any measure which included any property qualification, acted on grounds of principle. But some of them also were long-standing opponents of votes for women, and they helped to carry that 1907 Conference resolution against Hardie's advice — and against the advice of many others too with a right to be heard. The Conference resolution now so fulsomely applauded by the *New Statesman* was opposed by the Women's Cooperative Guild, the National Federation of Women Workers, led by Mary Macarthur, the textile workers of Lancashire and Cheshire, the Manchester & Salford Women's Trade Council, the Leicester Hosiery Union, and many other trade unions and Labour women's organisations. All these bodies backed the slogan: 'Suffrage for women on the same terms as it is, or may be, granted to men'. And, happily for the good name of the Labour movement, at the I.L.P. Conference which met also in 1907, a resolution reiterating the demand advanced by the Woolwich Trades Council was carried by an overwhelming majority.

It is really a little late for the *New Statesman* in the year 1981 to be seeking to undermine Keir Hardie's reputation, particularly on the great question of women's rights where he did more than any other leader to establish the honour of the Labour Party. If this notion peddled by Peter Kellner was already, in Eva Gore-Booth's words, a stale red herring in 1907, how much worse does it stink today?

House of Commons, London SW1

Peter Kellner writes: I gladly accept Michael Foot's interpretation of what happened in 1907: indeed, his facts augment rather than contradict mine. My intention was certainly not to 'undermine Keir Hardie's reputation'; it was to clarify Foot's startling statement at Wembley that 'at one point the Conference. . voted against [the extension of the franchise to women]'. The conference in question did no such thing. Incidentally, the bill Hardie favoured, whatever its tactical advantages, would have given just two million women the vote (according to Hardie himself), at a time when seven million men were enfranchised.

Community radio

From Simon Partridge

Mr Smith calls for the Labour Party to promote community broadcasting (Letters, 30 Jan.). However, things are not quite as gloomy as he makes out.

The report of the Commission of Enquiry 'welcomed the development towards community radio', as did the TUC's Media Working Group in its recent pamphlet 'Behind the Headlines'. However, as Smith rightly points out, these fine words urgently need turning into political pressure on the Home Office. The Labour Party and the TUC need to press the Home Office to at least grant the existing cable radio stations experimental two year licences, as it has recently done for the Pay-TV experiments.

In the longer term we need to establish a Community Broadcasting Authority (a possibility considered in the third report of the Home Office Local Radio Working Party published in December 1980, but without any great enthusiasm) to encourage and licence non-profit, co-operatively run community stations, financed from a variety of sources — e.g. subscriptions from co-op members and grants from local authorities, as well as advertising. A proposal along these lines should be written into the Party's next manifesto. *NS* readers interested in such a project may like to know that the Local Radio Working Party of the Community Communications Group — a pressure group campaigning to develop non-profit localised media — can be contacted via 125A Royal College Street, London NW1 — tel: 01-388 7125, 1-5.30p.m, Mon-Fri.

92 Huddleston Road, London N7

Gremlin at work

From Nicolas Walter

The loss of two lines in my review of *The Christie File* (*NS* 30 January) gave rise to a seriously misleading account of Stuart Christie's treatment by the British authorities after his release from prison in Spain in 1967. He was twice arrested and tried — in 1968 for possession of *propaganda leaflets in the form of dollar bills, and in 1971-72 for possession of* detonators in connection with the Angry Brigade. (The passage in italics was omitted.) The first case got him a conviction but no imprisonment, the second got him an acquittal but 16 months' imprisonment on remand before the trial was over.

134 Northumberland Road, Harrow, Middx

Taking it back

From Christopher Hitchens

A few weeks ago I wrote a review of Isaiah Berlin's *Personal Impressions* (*NS* 2 January), in which I accused him of obstructing the career of Isaac Deutscher. I have since had a very generous letter from Professor Berlin, explaining with chapter and verse how this belief became current. I'm now quite satisfied that my interpretation was mistaken, and would like to withdraw what I wrote. I may add that Professor Berlin did not lay me under any threat or injunction. I simply want to correct the record.

New Statesman

Information wanted

Jane Austen: I am working on a new biography and would be glad to hear from anyone who has Austen family or Austen-Leigh family letters.

Park Honan, Dept. of English Language & Literature, University of Birmingham, PO Box 363, Birmingham

It's cold out there

From Steve Pound

I am writing in connection with the article (*NS* 30 January) 'Life's not so cosy in the suburbs'. In this article you make a number of criticisms of the General Secretary of COHSE, Albert Spanswick, and refer to him as a right-winger.

It may interest you to know that on a freezing cold day, 20 November 1980, Albert Spanswick was one of the protesters picketing South Africa House as part of the campaign for the release from prison of Oscar Mpetha. Oscar Mpetha is the organiser of the African Food and Canning Workers Union and has been imprisoned in South Africa along with many other prominent black trade unionists.

My point is this. Many British union leaders ensure that they parade their left-wing credentials before the press while there are some who are content to actually get out onto the streets in the cold and show their solidarity with the victims of oppression. Mr Spanswick also wrote a half-page article in a recent edition of the COHSE union journal about the plight of victimised black trade union organisers in South Africa generally and called for members to contact the Anti-Apartheid Movement. I can supply copies of eight union journals where the A.A. movement had to pay advertising rates to present this sort of information to readers. Mr Spanswick has made no such request.

Lest you claim that the above is uncharacteristic or a flash in the pan I can list the number of causes actively supported by Mr Spanswick; it compares most favourably with the activities of some union leaders who cherish their left credibility.

I am not an officer of COHSE; merely a member of six years' standing who has reason to appreciate many of the actions of my General Secretary and who resents your cheap and easy slur.

48 Elthorne Park Road, London W7

On the stone

From Harold Evans, Editor, Sunday Times

Before it passes into mythology I must correct the false impression you gave in your story about Rupert Murdoch and the *Sunday Times* editorial (*NS* 30 January). You state a true fact, then add to it an interpretation and conclude with a speculation by which time you are about 1,000 miles from the starting point. The correct facts are as follows.

Mr Murdoch was visiting the *Sunday Times* composing room, as management and owners have done in the past. He was shown by somebody my editorial page and I suppose it would take a super human being not to want to read it. He noticed that the leader had omitted the *Star* among the list of Express newspapers and drew this to the attention of somebody. A helpful gesture, you might say. In any event, he did not ask for it to be corrected, he did not 'approve' the editorial or pass any judgment at all on it. Because of the risk of misperception, I have discussed the incident with Mr Murdoch and nothing like it will occur again. Of that I am satisfied.

You went to great trouble to show a first and final edition to demonstrate that we had corrected a factual omission. If you had been fair you might have let your readers share the knowledge that the first and final editions of the editorial differed — in ways which undermined the hypothesis you laboured to create.

As for the final parapraphs about Morgan Grenfell and the *Sunday Times* consortium, you make another leap from fact to theory. The difficulty in the consortium making progress was not because Morgan Grenfell had acted for Mr Murdoch anywhere else. Morgan Grenfell did all we asked — and more. The trouble was that the Thomson Organisation insisted on priority for a corporate purchaser who would keep *The Times* going as well as the supplements and the *Sunday Times* — and the *Sunday Times* consortium, by definition, was never a corporate purchaser. Sometimes life is explained easier by the facts than by conspiracy theories.

200 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1

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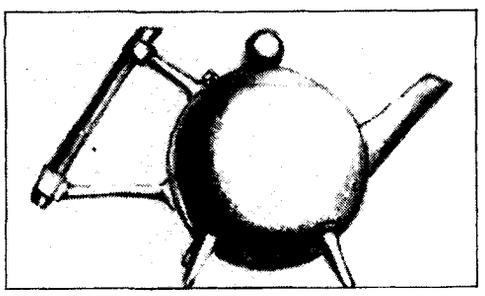
BOOKS & ARTS

Stephen Brook on how the arts & crafts movement tried — and failed — to change the British teapot

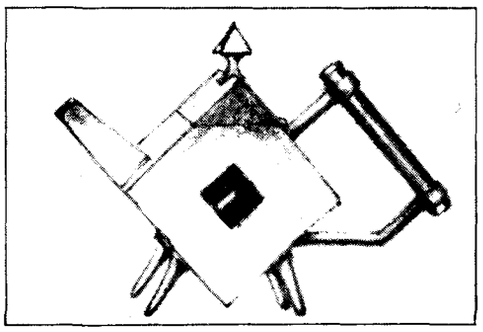
Crafts and the machine

In 1888 the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society was founded in London, and the title now characterises a vast assortment of artistic enterprises: from candlesticks to large country houses. Yet some of the most celebrated practitioners, such as Norman Shaw and William Morris, were at work decades earlier, and it becomes increasingly hard to see what fruitful links can be made within this array of artists and craftsmen. There were programmes, to be sure. Morris and Lethaby wrote at length on the *nature of craft and its relationship to industry* and society, and there are common threads to most of these writings and polemics: fidelity to materials, a preference for hand-work over machine-work, a distaste for borrowing academic styles, and, in the case of the Ruskinians, an assertion that a revival of individual craftsmanship would contribute to social regeneration. Some, such as Morris and Lethaby, were socialists; others, such as Norman Shaw and Voysey, were disdainful of socialism. Although innumerable groups and guilds sprang up at the close of the 19th century, they did not give much unity to the movement. It does indeed appear that Arts and Crafts is more a label of



convenience than an accurate categorisation.

Lionel Lambourne seems untroubled by all this. He has written a short, sometimes hasty, and mostly superficial account of this very varied group of craftsmen and architects. Even the title of his book, *Utopian Craftsmen,* is misleading. 'Utopian' may be a vaguely appropriate epithet for Ashbee and his rural Guild, but it scarcely applies to Norman Shaw or Voysey, nor even to Morris himself. It is worth noting, as Peter Davey does, that Shaw poured scorn on Morris for professing Communism while his company busily manufactured designs and products for the rich. As a survey, *Utopian Craftsmen* is reasonably comprehensive, beginning with precursors such as Pugin and Cole and ending with contemporary designers and potters. Lambourne deals clearly with the many groups and journals spawned by the movement, and devotes a chapter to its American offshoots. There is a good deal of information and plentiful illustration, but all the interesting issues are skirted.



For instance, at whom was all this artistic activity, backed up with programmes of varying degrees of idealism, directed? Davey quotes a contemporary response to Morris's early work which commends its antiquarian excellence but dismisses it as 'useless'. We now know that Morris's influence was profound, but as early as 1862 the questions of purpose and clientele were found to be troubling. The vernacular qualities (respect for materials, lack of excessive ornament, etc.) suggested, even then, the museum more than the home. It is the furniture of the nonprogrammatic Gimson and the Barnsleys that seems least dated and antiquarian.

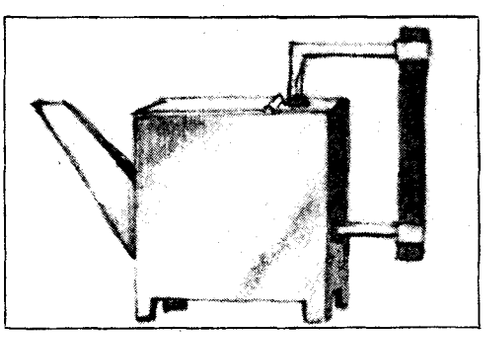
That the Arts and Crafts movement was directed almost exclusively at the upper middle class is no slight against it. Even Ashbee's Guild, though a co-operative workshop drawn from the working-class East End, was equally dependent on wealthy purchasers. It does need to be stated that Arts and Crafts was a profoundly domestic movement, catering neither to the poor nor to the aristocracy but to the stable and wealthy middle strata of Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Davey is well aware of this, but Lambourne gives little attention to the contradictions that this imposed.

Another issue is broached by Lambourne, but never made explicit. The innovations introduced by craftsmen such as W.A.S. Benson were taken up by companies such as Liberty's; Heal's too was closely tied to the movement. The very success of these innovations tended to undermine the credo of individual craftsmanship that was at the heart of the movement. The machine, against which Ruskin and to a lesser extent Morris had inveighed, helped to bring the movement's accomplishments to a wider public at a lower cost. Many Arts and Crafts leaders, it is true, were willing to accept the machine except when it attempted slavishly to imitate hand-work. Once, however, mass manufacture is accepted, the only thing a Christopher Dresser teapot of the 1870s (see illustrations) has in common with a Swedish teapot of a century later is good design. The weakness of Lambourne's concluding chapters is that what he is describing is good contemporary design rather than Arts and Crafts as such. Frank Pick of London Transport, whom he rightly praises, was an important designer, but hardly a descendant of Morris or Voysey.

Because he is dealing with architecture alone, Peter Davey does not have to spread himself so thinly. *Arts and Crafts Architecture* contains chapters on the major architects — Shaw, Voysey, Prior — but Davey also mentions, and copiously illustrates, many lesser-known figures whose work was in the Arts and Crafts tradition. He does not neglect the movement's impact on America and Europe, and he deals with the planning of garden cities as well as with individual buildings.

If we compare a Voysey cottage and a Mackintosh interior, it is hard to see what they have in common. Davey is very much aware of this problem of definition, but does not provide a satisfactory solution (understandably, because there is none). He mentions the familiar, if vague, hallmarks of the movement: use of local materials, individuality, distaste for the machine, and so forth. But it is a Ruskinian notion of 'changefulness' that Davey turns to most often. It usefully describes the varieties of fenestration and materials and roof-lines favoured by Arts and Crafts architects, but it doesn't get one very far. Similarly, Davey shows that they employed a particular kind of floor plan, with rooms opening on to a common corridor; but there are many exceptions.

It seems fair to say that the architects were united in opposition rather than in advocacy: they were hostile to classicism and neo-Georgianism, and to the regularity and conformity of mass designs. This, as Davey observes, doomed the movement after the first world war, as the pursuit of their principles depended on a rich, individualistic clientele then in decline. Even Ashbee, the most idealistic of them all, had to sell his Guild's products at a



high price. It was the Americans and the Germans who, by welcoming the machine, were able to leap over the dead end that the movement became, and lay the foundations of the Modern Movement.

Both Lambourne and Davey tend to be too uncritical. Davey rightly includes the Californian Greenes; Lambourne omits them but gives space to the shoddy work of the American charlatan Elbert Hubbard. Davey gives due praise to the major Arts and Crafts buildings — Sedding's Holy Trinity, Lethaby's Brockhampton church, Prior's Roker church, Mackintosh's Glasgow School of Art — but he looks with too kindly an eye on the succession of uninspired, cosy Edwardian country houses and the striking hideousness of Townsend's London museums. To be fair, this is a matter of taste and Davey is principally concerned with presenting a quantity of largely unfamiliar buildings, but a touch more acid would have been welcome, if only to differentiate between the distinguished, the distinctive, and the mediocre.

It is unfortunate that these two books on craftsmanship should contain many typographical errors. In addition, Lambourne misidentifies Dickens's Gradgrind, mis-spells Madox Brown, and dates a Morris lecture 40 years too early. □

Utopian Craftsmen: The Arts and Crafts Movement from the Cotswolds to Chicago by LIONEL LAMBOURNE *Astragal Books* £12.95

Arts and Crafts Architecture: The Search for Earthly Paradise by PETER DAVEY *Architectural Press* £12.95

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POETRY

Andrew Motion

Clairvoyance

ROY FISHER has always suffered from what Donald Davie calls 'the blindness or condescension of the metropolis to writing which is provincial in its origins or its subject matter'. But it's an explanation which risks obscuring one other reason for his neglect. In the Fifties and Sixties when many 'establishment' figures — notably Larkin — were denouncing the modernists, Fisher was seeking to learn from their example. In different ways Basil Bunting and Charles Tomlinson were — and had been — making the same effort, to similar effect. It seemed that all three were doomed to be more talked-about than read. Over the last few years, though, OUP have tried to gain them a wider audience. In 1978 they published Bunting's *Collected Poems* and Tomlinson's *Selected Poems*, and now they've produced Fisher's *Poems 1955-1980*. It contains all the poems included in the *Collected Poems* published by Fulcrum in 1968, as well as a large amount of more recent work, and should ensure that he receives the close attention he deserves.

It's not difficult, however, to see why Fisher has been denied a larger public. For one thing, there's almost no drama in his poems. He says himself 'In my poems there's seldom/any *I* or *you*' — which means there's not only seldom any love poetry, but also seldom any individuated human beings at all. Instead, he offers what he calls the 'music of the generous eye': poems which celebrate the phenomenal world by the clarity with which they perceive it. And when people do stray across his field of vision they frequently seem neither more nor less important than the scenery in which they appear. In fact people and objects are often almost indistinguishable — so much so that their functions are sometimes exchanged:

> There is a driftwood fire in the hearth,
> The smoke pulls down on the roof;
> there are two of them there,
> it is simple;
> and into the dunes
> their window faces its white eye.

At first glance, this approach to experience might not seem to include much human interest. But, as Fisher meticulously illustrates, his poems do not substitute purity of observation for the pleasures of action and narrative, but make the act of seeing itself dramatic. Throughout his career he has tried to create an absolutely authentic realism, consistently addressing himself to the world with a latter-day kind of wise passiveness:

> For 'realism':
> the sight of Lucas's
> lamp factory on a summer night;
> the shift coming off about nine,
> pale light, dispersing,
> runnels of people chased,
> by pavements drying off
> quickly after them,
> away among the wrinkled brown houses
> where there are cracks for them to go.

Nearly all Fisher's poems adopt this distanced but compassionate poetic strategy, notably his long elegy for bombed and brutally redeveloped Birmingham, *City*. And although reading his work in bulk allows its methods to emerge clearly, it also emphasises his limitations. His 'gentle eye' is extraordinarily affectionate and observant, but is rather apt to tyrannise his tone of voice. Fisher obviously realises the danger, and occasionally — and often successfully — abandons his preferred mode in favour of humour or surrealism. But these excursions can't altogether dispel the threat of a rather too-rigorous self-effacement and restraint. It's a sign of his integrity and, perhaps, the burden of his imagination to 'mistrust the poem in its hour of success,/ a thing capable of being/ tempted by ethics into the wonderful'. In *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry* Davie described Fisher as 'a Hardyesque poet in the cast of his sensibility', while emphasising that his work derives from distinctly different traditions.

MUCH THE same could be said of Penelope Shuttle: her aims and examples are often very unlike Hardy's, but she almost always shares his pleasure in what he referred to as 'putting on the manners of ghosts, wandering in their haunts, and taking their views of surrounding things'. That's to say, she habitually withholds information about her speakers' exact natures and situations, and instead gives a flickering, oblique version of her self and her subjects. The cloud in 'The Dancer', for instance:

> At last she lifts her arms, pauses,
> hesitation of the translator.
> And comes, like lace, like ice,
> to a standstill, at the edge of an ammunition,
> her frail geography barely remembered
> except as a swift erasure of shadows.

It's hardly surprising that this process should occasionally produce baffling obscurities. And since (again like Hardy) she is usually literal-minded about her methods of haunting and being haunted, it's only to be expected that she should sometimes sound absurd ('the ocean,/ like a ghost's throat,/grows translucent'). But these irritations are easily outweighed by the interest she provokes in her purpose. Her creation of a spectral persona isn't only a means of making the familiar strange — though it does that — but a way of discovering the human in the phenomenal. She turns herself into a ghost and disappears as a defence, so to speak, against the claims that her subjects press on her. If she addressed things openly — a landscape, say, or an archaeological find — she would have to respond simply to their face values. But it's not just general human elements that she discovers by vanishing — it's the hidden life of women in particular. This concern with what is sometimes called 'herstory', to distinguish it from history, obviously makes itself felt in poems dealing with childbirth and menstruation, but it is deeply and fascinatingly felt throughout the book. 'Three Lunulae, Truro Museum' is characteristic:

> I linger
> in the locked room
> of the gold,
>
> trying to see,
> beyond the sickle shapes,
> the faces of three women
>
> Sharp shadows breathe hard,
> shedding skins like dusty snakes
> Light twists in a violent retching
>
> For an instant
> there is the fragment of a lip,
> an eyebrow fine as a spider's threat

GERDA MAYER'S first collection is much less ambitious. 'Blood is a curse/I don't/let it slop over *my* verse', she insists, bluffly dissociating herself from a subject she feels to be reprehensibly 'fashionable'. It's an attitude which often prevents her from making the most of her subjects, but sometimes ensures that she achieves a reserved dignity. In a group of poems about her mother's death in a concentration camp, for instance, she understandably avoids giving a detailed or lengthy response on the grounds that her poems would necessarily be unequal to the events. She is quite properly 'Afraid/NOT to appal'. But the tension between horrendous subject matter and natural restraint doesn't always end in deadlock. Much of her best work resolves it by adopting a quirky Stevie Smith-like tone. Forms are broken, nursery rhyme rhythms adapted, and fairy story emblems redeployed in order to project — and protect — her vulnerability:

> Two singing birds lived in my eyes
> and they were birds of paradise
> hatched out by blue and feathered skies
>
> The birds have flown and in their stead
> two ravens crouch within my head
> who peck the loving day stone-dead

Christopher Hampton is more forthright, but while there's no doubting the sensitivity of his social conscience his power to recreate it in poetic form is often open to question: 'O, this England of good sense and great/Concern still manages, upon its ailing currency,/To cheat the dispossessed and juggle states/For the market engineers of privilege and profit'. In most of the poems in *A Cornered Freedom* the urgency of his intention is diminished by the thundering of his rhetoric, and its power of arousing sympathy weakened by his tendency to reject particular details in favour of abstractions. □

Nicki Jackowska

Last in a long line

Departure time drew near.
I desired a perfect moon-face
round and still, to shine in at the window
as I rounded up my enemies
and packed my pincers and my firearms
into the blue travelling bag.

I wanted a song like thick cream
or a high flute-song that would pierce
my skin and run mercurial from my fingers.
I wanted to know that the current
would always carry me home.
I wanted an appointment with paradise.

I also wanted disarmament
and drowned the salty days in words
that had lost their edge.

The latest envelope was wrapped
in its crust, and locked in with the rest.
The dust flew from old conversations.
Language lay silent at the bottom
of the pool, the cabinet pinched
my finger as I closed its door.

Poems 1955-1980 by ROY FISHER *Oxford* £7.95
The Orchard Upstairs by PENELOPE SHUTTLE *Oxford* £3.95
Monkey on the Analyst's Couch by GERDA MAYER *Ceolfrith Press* £2.50
A Cornered Freedom by CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON *Harry Chambers/Peterloo Poets* £3

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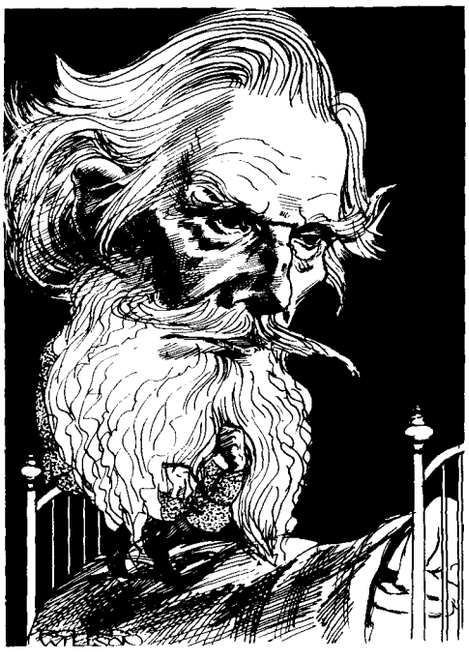
Morris Fraser

Educating Eros

Havelock Ellis by PHYLLIS GROSSKURTH *Allen Lane* £10
Edward Carpenter: Prophet of Human Fellowship by CHUSHICHI TSUZUKI *Cambridge* £15

Doctor Ellis viewed sexual ignorance much as Mr Wilde did celibacy — as an abnormality in its own right, and the germ of several more. Not only was this extraordinary man an analyst without clients, a researcher without subjects and a sexologist who never fathered a child; but there is no record that, as a doctor, he ever examined or treated a single patient — apart, that is, from a short compulsory period as a student in general practice, and three months at the outset of his career spent supervising a Harrogate spa. Yet his writing on human sexuality, especially his *Sexual Inversion* (1897), was by



far the most comprehensive and most intelligent work on the topic that had up till then appeared.

Indeed he anticipated Freud to some extent, and Freud was indebted to him for the concept of 'narcissism', around which he constructed much of his own teaching on aberrant sexuality. Also, Ellis's *The Nationalisation of Health* (1912) appears to be the first advocacy of such a system on record, and many of its proposals form the basis of the National Health Service.

Havelock Ellis was born of East Anglian seafaring folk, and spent much of his youth and adolescence in Australia, or accompanying his father on long voyages. There followed some very unsettled years spent in New South Wales as a schoolmaster; he took to reading philosophy and experienced a kind of humanitarian 'conversion', then sailed almost at once for England and entered St Thomas's Hospital as a medical student in 1880. There, however, he lingered unpromisingly for year after year, in the end managing to obtain the somewhat inferior diploma of the Society of Apothecaries. But outside St Thomas's Ellis was becoming intoxicated with the life of radical-literary Bloomsbury, with the New Thought, the New Woman, and with the prevailing brink-of-century optimism which, caught beautifully here by Phyllis Grosskurth, was not to be finally extinguished until 1939; Ellis himself contributed *The New Spirit*, critical essays, in 1890.

He became a friend of Eleanor Marx, Edward Carpenter and Bernard Shaw; in 1887 he had met Edith Lees and four years later the two were united in what Ellis called 'a union of affectionate comradeship, in which the specific emotions of sex had the smallest part'. The 'alternative' values of their circle then were such as to make legally conventional marriage to the hefty secretary who signed herself 'Comrade Edith' seem cranky enough in itself; Ellis learned for certain only from a letter of 1893, however, that Edith was a lesbian. Phyllis Grosskurth speculates, reasonably, that Ellis's shock and puzzlement — and his friendship at the time with John Symonds and Edward Carpenter — prompted the research that led to the appearance of *Sexual Inversion*.

This book, though based almost entirely on anonymous case histories supplied by letter, is by any standards a masterpiece of clarity and common sense, beginning with an examination of homosexuality as seen and practised in earlier cultures and then, drawing on the detailed case studies, arriving at a number of coherent and humane conclusions — not least that the invert is more degraded by attempts to 'correct' his abnormality, converting him into 'a feeble simulacrum of a normal person', than by his remaining a 'healthy, self-respecting and self-restrained' homosexual. Ellis's cases came only from a very small segment of society, and the conclusions are to an extent marred by his near-obsession with eugenics — another enthusiasm that was to wane sharply in the 1930s. Homosexuality was often, he wrote, 'nature's way of winding up a neurotic and failing stock'; a 'cure' could put into the subject's hands 'an undesirable power of reproduction'.

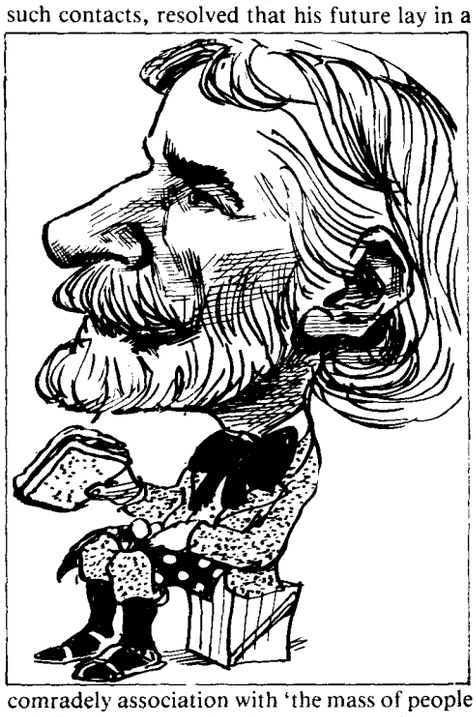
Still, it is an index of the progressive quality of the book that there was an immediate uproar, and a court case. The descriptions of deviant sex are quite specific and I have no doubt that, if the book had been written today, the response to what was called in the indictment 'a lewd wicked bawdy scandalous and obscene libel' would scarcely differ.

Ellis's courage was born partly of naiveté, and he was never so forthright again, but his urge to investigate and inform stimulated some dozen books and innumerable chapters and articles, all documented in this superb and immensely stimulating biography. Phyllis Grosskurth informs and scrutinises, but does not presume to psychologise, and there are no silly interpretations such as the conclusion in a biography of 1979 that Ellis was a 'repressed homosexual'. That he was thin and effeminate with a high 'squeaky' voice, joked awkwardly about the small size of his penis and hinted at being impotent does give room for speculation about chromosome abnormalities, but Dr Grosskurth quite properly draws no conclusions where conclusions are not possible.

To me the most absorbing section of the book concerns Ellis's correspondence with Freud, who was almost an exact contemporary, but who secured relative distinction by dealing in real people rather than in 'case studies'. The two never met, and though both ended their days in London only a short distance apart, each was by that time too old and weak to call on the other. To the end Ellis clung to his hereditary view of sexuality and his essential optimism, expostulating with Freud because he 'gave an evil aspect to human impulses by regarding hate as a primary motive'.

Edward Carpenter, the English disciple of Walt Whitman, was one of Ellis and Symonds's 'cases' and is the subject of a concise and attractive biography by Chushichi Tsuzuki. Carpenter's name crops up repeatedly in accounts of the revival of socialism at the end of the 19th century and the birth of the Independent Labour Party; Tsuzuki believes he can now present a more complete study of the man by relating much of his 'democratic' interest to his homosexuality, an area said to be previously 'taboo' — though Carpenter's life and work as a homosexual was in fact the partial subject of a study published some ten years ago.

Carpenter grew up in a genteel solicitor's family in Brighton; as a day boy at the local school he spent most of his time in the company of his six sisters, absorbing their several graces and 'accomplishments'. He matriculated at Trinity Hall, Cambridge, attaining a clerical fellowship in 1869, and being ordained Deacon in the following year. But before full ordination to the priesthood he read and corresponded with Walt Whitman and, after a number of such contacts, resolved that his future lay in a



comradely association with 'the mass of people and the manual workers'. A substantial legacy came his way in 1882; he bought a market garden and became the first exemplar of all middle-class simple-lifers, weaving and sandal-making, adopting vegetarianism and pacifism, patronising the 'simple' country folk and applauding rural values in preference to the more 'commercial' values of the town.

A central element in Carpenter's version of democracy was of a kind to alarm respectable publishers of the time. His best-known work is probably *Towards Democracy* (1883-5), a long prose-poem in which much of the egalitarian sentiment is carried by images of the 'thick-thighed coarse-fleshed young bricklayer with the strap round his waist' or the 'grimy and toil-smeared figure of a stoker' — to the extent that Fisher Unwin, publisher of the third edition, panicked in the wake of the Wilde trial and wanted to withdraw the book. Carpenter was far from alone in his fascination with what would now be called 'rough trade', nor was he the first to elevate his homosexual inclinations to an ideal of manly comradeship that would 'abolish all class distinctions', but he was probably the first Englishman to live openly and

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with impunity as a practising homosexual — and to this extent is seen quite rightly by Tsuzuki as a pioneer of the present-day movement for gay liberation and equality.

Carpenter's circle of acquaintances was huge (the entire Labour Cabinet sent him a greeting on his 80th birthday) and Tsuzuki captures the age delightfully — riots in Trafalgar Square, 'chemistry classes' for Anarchists in Camden Town, bombs in Walsall, Carpenter's aproned ex-labourer friend George Merrill cooking 'lovely little dinners' for the household at Millthorpe, a clergyman so impressed by Carpenter's writing on 'chastity between the sexes' as to make them into a series of lectures to his congregation.

The details of Carpenter's 'alternative' *modus vivendi* at Millthorpe would in these days scarcely rate even a yawn, but by them rather than by his somewhat undistinguished writing he was, with Ellis, an educator. The adolescent Edward Carpenter believed himself a 'hopeless monstrosity', but because of his and Ellis's joint influence no youngster with homosexual feelings need ever believe himself anything of the kind again. □

FICTION

James Campbell

Buying life

Burnt Water by CARLOS FUENTES *Secker* £6.50
Introduction 7: Stories by New Writers *Faber* £4.95
Kepler by JOHN BANVILLE *Secker* £5.95

'Don't ever kill anyone for money,' a boy's mother tells him in one of the stories in *Burnt Water*. 'Do it with reason, with passion. It will make you clean and strong. Never kill anyone unless you buy a little life for yourself.' The advice is quite sound. In slightly adapted form, Carlos Fuentes applies it to his own characters time and again: he is forever shocking them with a little death in order to expose their already moribund attitudes to their own lives, and always in the cause of some other character's (or, of course, the reader's) reinvigoration.

Fuentes denies the fallaciousness of the pathetic fallacy. To him, the world is indifferent to man only where other men are concerned, for they are also deluded. Nature may be vengeful, but never indifferent. If we sometimes think it is, it is only because reality was one day shattered into a thousand pieces: 'its head rolled in one direction and its tail in another, and all we have is one of the pieces from the gigantic body.'

The stories in *Burnt Water* are marvellous affirmations of that image. Their characters are almost all tragic, but in different ways. Some, like Juan Luis, who thought he was in love and drowned in the lake where he dived in search of a mirage, are, mistakenly, sure of their perceptions and suffer for it. Others are frightened of time and change, like the Mandarin who ritualises his store of old clothes and dies at the hands of young thieves seeking fashionable gear. Others still, like the Doll Queen, are trapped in the illusion which is the view the outside world has of them: she, the beautiful little girl who sat beneath the eucalyptus and wove garlands from the branches, is, 15 years later, condemned to be a child still, although now misshapen and confined to wheelchair. These characters are afraid of life and have slipped unknowingly beneath its rim until forced to confront a catastrophe which may become a living hell.

Most of these stories are, in effect, moral tales about the consequences of being overconfident of truth or of denying 'the beast' which lives inside us. The beast wished that the Doll Queen would grow up — for human purposes.

Fuentes's manipulation of time and the ways in which it operates on memory and imagination permits him the vision of a continuing past. In an Author's Note he writes that he owns an imaginary apartment house in Mexico City, the setting of most of the stories. In the basement, which is sinking into the mud, lives a ghostly sorceress, and in the penthouse an old revolutionary turned profiteer; on the intermediary floors live the characters who people *Burnt Water*. The building will eventually disappear into the mud, with the profiteer being last to perish, but there it will come upon the oldest city in the Americas which will then recall its birth.

The wealth of imagination and invention in these stories is simply breathtaking, and just occasionally suffocating. Where the majority of writers in English make a virtue of a spare prose, Fuentes is willing to wrap up everything in multi-coloured ribbons of detail which at first appear to be strangling the story and the characters in it. He then snips through them to commit that clean, passionate murder which buys a little life.

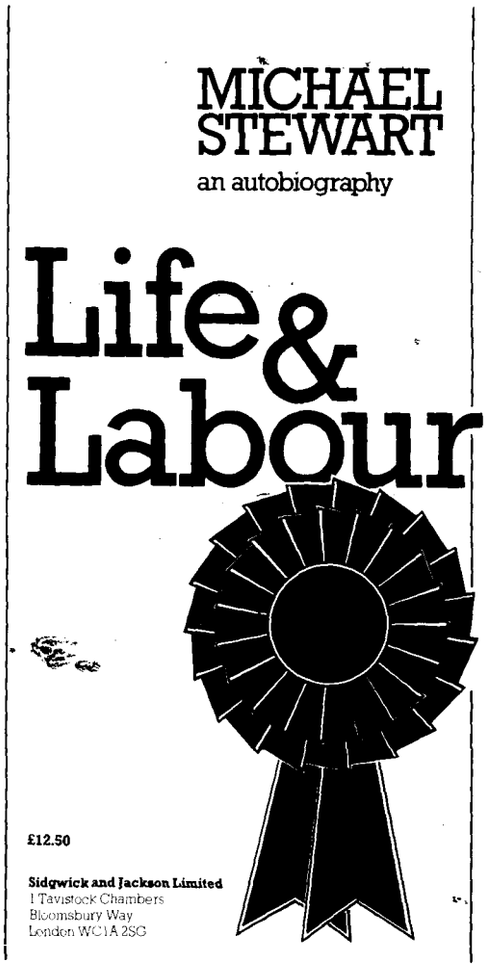
FABER'S latest *Introduction* contains some good material but also some which is disappointing considering that the editors have, presumably, the whole country's young-ish talent to choose from. The strangest inclusion is Amanda Hemingway's novella, 'The Alchemist'. It is a bizarre tale of a girl trapped in a scheme of murder by an alchemist and a witch who live in houses which, although she knows the street well, had never seemed to be there before. All sorts of murders and personality changes take place until she is, at the end, saved by love. Perhaps fantasy is a matter of taste, but my feeling is that Ms Hemingway should take her namesake's advice and write about what she knows.

Kazuo Ishiguro was born in Nagasaki long after the bomb fell but his 'A Strange and Sometimes Sadness' proves that he knows a lot about it. In this story, by far the best in the book, a middle-aged Japanese woman recalls her youth in Nagasaki and how the arrival of young Japanese servicemen from the war, thought to be near its end, was eagerly awaited. Her friend, Yasuko, hopes to marry one. 'That's all I ask for. To have children and that the bombs won't come and take them away.' A minute earlier, the narrator has seen on her friend's face an eerie expression which foreshadows the coming nightmare:

> And it was then that it happened, that strange thing . . . I saw Yasuko staring towards me with an expression so ghastly it completely distorted her face. The eyes were staring so frantically they trembled with tension. Her jaw was quivering, her teeth starting to bare. A cry of alarm escaped me.
> 'What's the matter?' she said.

It is an exquisite moment, in which one of the thousand lost pieces of Fuentes's reality becomes momentarily visible. Also assured are Tim Owens's story of a thwarted assassin, related side by side with the reactions to his failure of his distant associates, and Stephen Kupfer's 'Smoked Goose'. Set in the early Sixties, 'before innocence made its world-wide comeback', it is a tale of corruption and deceit going under the name of love. Mr Kupfer's other story, 'Jesus Lives in the City', has similar concerns. It tells of a religious zealot masturbating over a picture of a naked girl, disfiguring it, meanwhile stabbing himself behind the scrotum with a large pin. The agony, both physical and spiritual, is keenly observed but I don't think it is mere squeamishness which makes me suggest that the story would have been even more effective had the torture been less extreme and more recognisable.

HAVING WRITTEN *Doctor Copernicus*, John Banville has now applied his unusual gifts to the great mathematician and astronomer, Johannes Kepler. The most impressive feature of this novel is that Mr Banville has forged a language which, although not scrupulously, stiflingly accurate, comes naturally out of the mouths of his Renaissance characters. Kepler's discoveries are fitted comfortably into the action, which is otherwise mostly composed of his misfortunes. In 1611 he writes, 'I have lost everything: my family, my honoured name, even my country.' It is a fine historical novel, but one of which it must be said that it never goes beyond being a Historical Novel. Unlike, say, *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *The Fixer*, *Kepler* does not use history in order to penetrate the present. Nonetheless, this innumerate reviewer was fascinated to learn that if you take any double-digit number, transpose the digits and subtract the result from the original, or vice-versa depending on which is greater, the answer will always be divisible by nine. The reason why is here too. □



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FILMS

John Coleman

No in at the room

Stalker (A) *Academy Two*
Nine to Five (AA) *Odeon, Leicester Square*
The Formula (AA) *Empire*
Prom Night (X) *Dominion; Odeons, Swiss Cottage, Westbourne Grove and Kensington*
The Lady in Red (X) *general release*

Given the fluctuating price of freedom (and I write, of course, under the heavy shackles of capitalism), one has learnt to read between the images in films emanating from eastern Europe, to pay less heed to the words than to the pictures. Such delicate cryptography is invited by the Polish Zanussi, absolutely demanded by the Hungarian Jancso. But with both these directors (the second increasingly reduced to choreographic pattern-making) there has been warrant for sensing the obliquity as tactical. With the unsettling genius of Andrei Tarkovsky, working out of the very heart of the USSR, one would seem to be up against something even more complex. His hermetically autobiographical *Mirror* (1974) met with a chilly reception, both bureaucratic and critical (assuming the two may be separated), in his own country. When it finally landed up at the Camden Plaza last April, it was to a high-level consensus of acclaim, if only for the stunning potency of its 'visuals'. Over its actual content and drift there was a lot less than unanimity. Tarkovsky *is* difficult.

AND IT says a good deal about the nature of his difficulty, the difficulties he presents, that his *Stalker* (1979) — on the face of it, his most explicit representation of a grim Soviet reality — should have been allowed out, as it were, so rapidly. Drawn by that masterly S-F team, Arkady and Boris Strugatsky from their novel, *Roadside Picnic* (the original was set in Canada and has been otherwise altered: greatly denuded and allegorised), it presupposes an unpopulated country 'Zone', policed by armed guards and harbouring a Room where one's innermost desires will find fulfilment. A meteorite or a visitation from outer space may have been the cause, 20 years earlier. To this miraculous grail the 'stalker' of the title, a grim-faced fellow with a shaven head, anyone's emblem of a political prisoner or camp refugee, agrees to guide a Writer and a Professor. The simple narrative line is their laborious journey there, their swift return. En route, there is much wrangling. The writer (Anatoly Solonitsyn) is a drinker, cynical, ultimately jibbing at the Room's threshold with nervous casuistry: it will either confirm his genius, in which case his motivation for creating will have gone; or his heart's desire may prove something hidden and foul, better left undisturbed. The professor (Nikolai Grinko), a scientist accused by the writer of needing rehabilitation, of having an eye to a Nobel Prize, turns out to have other aims. Fearing the Room's potential for evil (he talks of Mafias, dictators), he primes a bomb to destroy it but, after a frantic wrestle in the mud with Stalker (Aleksandr Kaidanovsky) and more words, as abruptly changes his mind.

At this profoundly pessimistic level of discourse, we might — in all honesty — be listening to the sort of allegorical confrontations with which J.B. Priestley was wont to bowl over theatrical parties in the Thirties and Forties. And if we are determined to politicise the film, to the exclusion of other resonances, it is easy enough to read into the Writer's predicament at least (with a sod's nod to the actor's surname) a premonition of the ungrateful prickliness of a Solzhenitsyn arrived in the West. To this degree, the Soviet powers-that-be may have shown a certain wiliness in liberating *Stalker* after such humming-and-hawing over *Mirror*.

But, if it becomes obvious that Tarkovsky's film lends itself to nothing so facile as a stab in the front for his native land, it is equally apparent that its formidable physical appearance, the dreadful interiors and landscapes of most of it, must ferry over a peculiarly Russian feeling of entrapment and desolation. Alternating without particular rhyme or reason between monochrome and colour, the images most likely to stay in the mind's eye like grit are those shot in a grimy black-and-white — Stalker's ill-lit, stained house; a wretched pub; littered wasteland — as if they had been peeled away from the more sombre and powerful pages of a Dostoevsky novel. A kind of heritage of Russianness, that Russia of the soul which has lost its soul, is profoundly exploited throughout.

Because Tarkovsky is surely the most Russian of directors. How else to explain the profusion of religious references, from an icon glimpsed among other detritus in a stream, through Stalker's verbal ramblings about Christ at Emmaus and the Writer's sudden donning of a crown of thorns, down to Stalker's wife's direct address to camera near the end, where she quietistically accepts him as 'one of God's fools'? Some may detect in this — and the closing thought-magic with glasses wrought by the couple's mutant child — a note of hope, of optimism. It came too late for me in this extraordinary, wilful and hypnotic voyage into a void.

SHORT shrift to the rest. Colin Higgins's disappointing *Nine to Five,* ostensibly deploying Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin and Dolly Parton as office workers in revolt against an m.c.p. of a boss, is very good for the odd laugh but elsewhere pretty awful, like Frank Tashlin on a bad day with Ms Parton breastily doubling up for Jayne Mansfield. It has about as much to do with women's lib as French knickers. *The Formula*, a fecklessly confused thriller with George C. Scott as a cop on the trail of a process for converting coal into synthetic fuel and Marlon Brando synthetically earning a million bucks as a mouthing, omnipotent oil magnate and baddie, is said to have been disowned by its director, John G. Avildsen. Take the money and run, eh, J.G? *Prom Night* is a horror film that fails to horrify, mostly by putting the camera in the wrong place but somewhat by being plain silly, with a prom out of *Carrie*, fetching Jamie Lee Curtis out of Carpenter's *Halloween* and *The Fog*, and credibility — along with the first corpse — out of the window. Quickly half-recommended: *The Lady in Red*, zippy, unfactual account of Moll Flanders-ish broad who came out of that Biograph with Dillinger in 1934. See also NFT season, 'Roger Corman's New World', for lots more of similar till 1 March.

TELEVISION

Julian Barnes

Pawnography

'NOW I MUST do somesing,' bemoaned the glum and grizzled Nordic voice, 'or I am hanged wisout resistance.' Two minutes later, another Nordic voice, similarly worried, responded as if faced with personal — even genital — disorder: 'My flag is hanging, unfortunately.' A bit later, the first voice came as near to exultation as its range permitted. 'Vell, I can't lose sis any more — perhaps I am vinning.' It was spoken with the intonation of one accustomed to examining his birthday presents for protruding wires, and alarm clocks.

In other words, *The Master Game* (BBC-2) was irresistibly back, and we were once again being allowed our privileged Red Rover tour of the skulls of that rare mutant breed, the chess hotshot. The two Nordic woodpushers —rather unchivalrously characterised by Jeremy James as 'rusty grandmasters' — were holder Lothar Schmid and Heinz Donner. They contrived one of those games which is intensely boring to begin with (by move 13 the board was entirely symmetrical), then turns plain odd (two pairs of doubled pawns on the same file), spurts belatedly into action, and ends in a draw by perpetual check. 'Vell, vell,' observed one of them, 'it vas a most amusing game.' You almost expected him to say. 'Ve haf vays of making you laf.'

Which indeed is the case. The intensity of their concentration on a subject which can only ever relate to itself is impressive, fearsome and comic. This year there is, alas, no Walter Browne — that McEnroe of the 64 squares — but the less combustible players, like Schmid, Donner and Hort, can be just as much fun. They fret and squirm like Kafka civil servants, fearing (quite rightly) that the smallest error in their paperwork will cause the floor to open up beneath them. At the moment, the British boys (Nigel Short and Tony Miles) are topping their divisions, though my money's still on one of the Mitteleuropean fretters (Hort, if you happen to be passing your local Ladbroke's). Splendid presentation, as ever; but the commentary, by Jeremy James and William Hartston, is threatening to become a bit overperky. If Hartston reminds us once more that Schmid is a millionaire publisher of cowboy fiction, I'm going to stamp on his pawns.

'AFTERNOON PLUS' (Thames) resourcefully snared Studs Terkel last week; though it was, to be honest, a rather lacklustre, post-lunch Terkel that we got, all kneejerk populism and Pentagon bashing. Perhaps he was understimulated by interviewer Simon Reed, who told him that his last book was *Working*. Oh no it wasn't. Even so, this scarcely excused Terkel from spending the whole time plugging his chum James Cameron's book *Points of Departure,* which the cameraman should have confiscated after its first half-dozen passes across the lens.

The same programme — always potentially serendipitous — also included a lively report on an African village just off the M11, where a Ghanaian chief's son zealously tries to bend English schoolchildren's preconceptions about his continent. And it began with Tim Sainsbury, the MP who can't understand his own bill. 'Well I agree this is a very difficult one,' he replied when asked to explain his Indecent Di-

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plays Control Bill. He said he felt like someone who could recognise an elephant when they saw one, but couldn't define one. I know what he means — I feel exactly the same way about anti-porn campaigners; but if you can't define an elephant, should you legislate about its breeding habits?

Mary Parkinson, who was interviewing the Mark II grocer, found herself slightly unnerved by the way the interview format kept making her put the libertarian-porno case. As she was dressed even more as a Julie Andrews lookalike than usual, one couldn't help sympathising. 'Let's face it, full frontal nudity *is* sometimes a work of art,' she found herself doggedly asserting by the end. Full dorsal nudity was more to the point in *Degas: The Unquiet Spirit* (BBC-2) which proved the exception to the rule that RM Munich coproductions inevitably get right up die Nase. It was well photographed, intelligently scripted by David Thompson (though is there *still* a school of thought maintaining that the artist disliked and therefore uglified women?), and extremely interesting.

As with all programmes about painters, one began vaguely hoping to discover 'the secret' of the subject: always a vain expectation (and not Mr Thompson's fault). Typical was the moment when the advice of Ingres to his junior was quoted: 'Draw lines, young man, draw lines —then you will be a real artist.' Of course, one thought, *of course*, and noddingly copied down the *apercu*. Afterwards it seemed to disintegrate in one's hands. But then the master's wisdom is only for use of the pupil; the outsider might as well chew a mouthful of sand.

ART

John Spurling

Ancient & modern

John Hubbard *Warwick Arts Trust, 33 Warwick Square, SW1*

Seeing one of Monet's *Haystacks* and failing to recognise any subject set Kandinsky off on his road to abstraction. From the far side of abstraction John Hubbard's paintings return to Monet — at least Monet is the first name one thinks of. Hubbard's two drawings called *Clodgy Point* are unmistakably Monetesque — the outline of an isolated rock dissolved by small strokes of charcoal into an impression of light and spray. But this is of course to see the drawings with eyes accustomed to Post-Impressionism. The young Kandinsky would have seen no subject at all. If one has just been looking at Hubbard's indubitably abstract earlier work, one is likely to see the rock's outline *materialising* rather than dissolving.

Although Hubbard will be 50 this year and the exhibition organised by Bryan Robertson at the Warwick Arts Trust is a mini-retrospective, the whole show has this sense of ambivalence and, in the best sense, uncertainty. The fluidity and lack of outline of the subject-matter — water, foliage, rock-facets half hidden by plant-life — and the technique — dabs and dashes of paint or charcoal — directly express something equally formless, still forming, in the artist. His personal history no doubt has something to do with it. He is an American, though he has lived in Dorset for the last 20 years, and as an art-student in the high days of the New York school of Abstract Expressionism (Pollock, de Kooning, Kline, etc.) studied under Morris Kantor and Hans Hofmann. Yet he left America partly to escape the narrow orthodoxies of the New York art-world and had fallen under the spell of Chinese landscape painting before he became an abstractionist. Writing about his own work in the catalogue he quotes Hsieh Ho: 'In art, the terms ancient and modern have no place.'

The Chinese influence is hardly discernible in his early work. The paintings done in England during the Sixties are flat, gestural, energetic things reminiscent of de Kooning and the British Cornwall painters, especially Lanyon. What they owe to landscape is chiefly their earth and sky colours; the rest is the artist's subjective feeling in the presence (or rather absence, since they were painted in the studio) of nature.

A visit to the Atlas Mountains altered his technique completely. He now began to use bright colours, small brush-strokes and passages of calligraphy. But the sudden change of subject and technique was also a change of outlook. Where before, adhering to the leading artistic fashion of the period, he had been content to treat landscape as little more than a kind of airfield from which to take off into the free spaces of subjective abstraction, he now began to realise that his giddy youth was over. Landscape painting was not, as the abstract expressionists more or less assumed, a closed and completed phase in art. The fact that Monet turned into Kandinsky and Cézanne into Braque did not exhaust their possibilities nor preclude reopening the whole question.

The question, of course, which preoccupied the European landscape painters of the 19th century, as it preoccupied the Chinese for at least a thousand years before that, was how to balance what you saw with what you felt about it. To find that balance would be to give the viewer the 'poetic reality' of a particular aspect of nature as opposed to its mere surface appearance; and to consider that the search was over because Monet had found such a reality for his haystacks or waterlilies and Cézanne for the Bibémus quarry or Mont St Victoire is like saying that the search for human form in sculpture ended with the Ancient Greeks.

Hubbard's first experiments after 1969 were directed towards obtaining a more subtle and thoughtful expression of movement than had been possible with the boisterous skid-marks and spatters of his Abstract Expressionist tech-

ARTS GUIDE

GEORGE ORWELL memorial prize

For the sixth year of the **George Orwell Memorial Prize, Penguin Books Ltd.** are offering an award of £750. The award will be given for an article, essay or a series of articles commenting on current cultural, social or political issues anywhere in the world.

The work must have been published in the UK, in a newspaper, periodical or pamphlet in the preceding year. For the 1981 award any article or pamphlet which appeared in 1980 will be eligible. The judges will be looking for originality, literary merit and expressive power.

The 1980 award was divided equally between David Marquand for his article **INQUEST ON A MOVEMENT** first published in *ENCOUNTER* and E P Thompson for his series of articles **THE STATE OF THE NATION** first published in *NEW SOCIETY*.

Submissions should be sponsored either by the editor of the publication in which the article appeared, or by the organisation which commissioned the pamphlet. No entry will be considered unless it is so sponsored.

The closing date for receipt of entries is 1 May 1981. All entries must be accompanied by an entry form available from Barbara Buckley, National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ. Telephone 01-870 9055.

RSC
Warehouse
DONMAR THEATRE
6, 7 and 9–12 Feb. 7.30pm
TELEVISION TIMES
by Peter Prince
'Funny and constantly diverting...carried through with splendid attack' T.L.S.
'Stephen Frears' superb company ....wonderful acting' Times
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OVAL HOUSE
The Women's Theatre Group
5-8 & 11-15 Feb. at 7.30 p.m.
Tickets £1.50
Plus 50p Membership
52 Kennington Oval
London SE11
01-582 7680

UNICORN
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by Stefan Reisner & Rainer Hachfeld
Translated by Roy Kift
Music by Colin Sell
For 5-9 years
Opens 7 Feb (Sats & Suns half term 2.30 p.m.)
Seats 90p-£2.50
Great Newport St.
W.C.2.
836 3334

Peasants and Countrymen in Literature
Conference at Roehampton Institute of HE
12-13 and 14 Feb
Speakers include
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English Dept. Secretary, Southlands College, Parkside, London SW19 5NN.
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nique; at the same time he hinted at depth, both the actual depth of many layers of brush-strokes and the illusory depth of what in nature would lie behind the dense patterns of coloured texture (suggesting foliage or water, with an occasional stiffening of rock). Passages of blue flicker among green, pink, orange and brown to give recession as well as Cézannian breathing-spaces; and in some paintings — unfortunately there is no example in this show — the movement becomes an inward vortex at roughly top-centre, the aftermath almost of a baroque Assumption whose figures have already vanished beyond the top of the canvas.

In the more recent paintings movement has grown slower, less diagonal and dramatic, as Hubbard's emphasis has shifted towards the solidity of landscape. Rocks, quarries and cliff-faces have become his subject-matter, still half veiled in the small brush-strokes and calligraphic marks which express water, foliage, undergrowth or encrustations of weed and lichen. But the depth remains ambivalent. The rocks and stone faces are not yet strictly three-dimensional, they can be read just as easily as a colour-field, areas of brown or grey paint whose solidity and hardness are conceived only in relation to the soft trails of green, pink or purple which lie on the surface. The space of the paintings, in other words, is still presented in accordance with the canons of New York abstraction and if the viewer fancies he can see something beyond the flat, Hubbard neither precisely endorses nor denies his vision.

The charcoal drawings, however, have been playing with depth, shadow and three-dimensionality for some while and the two most recent, done in Kew Gardens last year, use chiaroscuro and perspective unequivocally to create a corridor of deep space. Almost certainly Hubbard will soon be edging the balance of his paintings further in the same direction. What then? He will have arrived, I think, more or less at his real starting-point, delicately poised between the objective forms of nature and the subjective handwriting of his own visual imagination. The ancient and modern art of landscape painting is not, after all, defunct, but very much on the mend and living in England, with an American passport. □

THEATRE

Benedict Nightingale

Colon-ising

Virginia by EDNA O'BRIEN *Haymarket*
Four in a Million devised by LES BLAIR *Theatre Upstairs*
Present Laughter by NOEL COWARD *Greenwich*

Henry Irving gave his most famously outrageous performance in a melodrama called *The Bells;* and, mindful of the spiritual omnipresence of Vanessa and Clive, I caught myself wondering last Friday if Maggie Smith wasn't repeating history. Her Virginia Woolf certainly had to live a pretty concentrated stage life. By 8.10 her adored mother had died, and she had either been or (probably) imagined she had been seduced by her half-brother; by 10.15 these adolescent traumas had fulfilled their long-term logic, pitching her into the river like the distraught Ophelia; and in between there had been the ups and downs of marriage, madness, an affair with Vita Sackville-West, two wars, much hobnobbing with the meritocracy, and ever more emotional striptease.

Miss Smith had rasped and raved, let out gruesome yells and mottled-faced screeches, coiled and twisted in agonised disgust at 'all that copulation', retched with sexual self-loathing, wailed and writhed on the floor, and, at one barely credible climax, seemingly sent the whites of her eyes spiralling out of their sockets. She had also, of course, done many less sensational things, including mope and mourn with hands shoved into the pockets of her frumpy cardigan, fastidiously snap and bitch at lesser beings, and ask, with a sort of infant bewilderment, 'who am I?' Rarely can such biological bravura have been seen on any stage.

I share the general admiration for the skills of Smith, O'Brien, and their director, Robin Phillips; and yet I found it increasingly hard to respond to the hotpot they've jointly prepared. Perhaps it was that we were plunged too speedily into Virginia's sufferings. Perhaps we were asked to feel before we could see. Or perhaps it was that her work went mainly unmentioned, and both her imporance and our interest were taken for granted. Many of those who weren't great Woolf fans in the first place must have felt alienated by her hideous self-absorption, her snobbery and élitism, the wonky morality that permitted her to bemoan the Hitler war as a threat to 'our manor-houses, our moats, our downs', her general presumption that Bloomsbury, its clotted affections and insipid creations were the epicentre of the universe.

It was instructive to learn from Miss O'Brien that Shaw had the she-Woolf in mind when he wrote his lament for a leisured, idle and blithely suicidal Britain, *Heartbreak House.* She was presumably the prototype for Hesione Hushabye, the siren who inveigled others into squandering their energies on beauty, romance and cloying personal relationships, a creature of hell as Shaw had earlier defined it in *Man and Superman.* For Leonard Woolf, the politically-aware Jew she patronised, enchained and devoured, she was certainly a lifelong Day of Atonement.

Woolf himself is Nicholas Pennell, a rumpled, moulting figure who mooches across the stage, pipe in mouth, head nervously bobbing, then slumps into one of the set's token chairs, like a Mastermind contestant who has realised too late he can't understand his chosen subject; and Patricia Conolly plays the 'over-ripe grape', Vita, who intermittently slouches on in purple, exuding genteel lust. They are the only supporting characters who appear, and their function is simply to break up what's essentially a long monologue, consisting of inordinate Virginia. Your theatre ticket buys access to her womb, stomach and vestigial heart. You can, so to speak, burrow down to the colon, to view the accumulated gunge; and, even if entrance to the working imagination is barred, you can get up as far as the throat, to hear line after line that sounds as if it's in invisible inverted commas, pre-packed for insertion in someone's memoirs. You can observe the epiglottis playing arch tricks with metaphor and conventional word-order: 'no light lover, he', 'heart you have none', 'you are so much in full sail, on the high tide'. Altogether, it's like taking a National Trust tour through the Woolf innards; and the trouble, slowly realised, was as simple as they were intricate. *I simply didn't want to be there.*

Four in a Million is the latest of several plays — Pete Atkins's *A and R,* for instance, or David Hare's resonant *Teeth 'n' Smiles* — exposing the grot behind the showbiz glitter. The difference is that it has been improvised, and very well improvised, by four players who evidently know at first hand what it's like to spend your days in 'Mrs Insley's guest house in Leicester' and your evenings trying to keep that charmless city's populace awake. Debbie Arnold is 'the Sensational Toni Lane', a musky-voiced sexpot, William MacBain one of those kilted songsters whose every offering sounds like a variation on 'Roamin' in the Gloamin'', Alan J. Clark a comedian with a mean line in smut and racial sneers; but the most fetching performance comes from Tracey Ullman's 'Lovely Beverley', on stage another spangled chanteuse, offstage an innocent and bore whose function is to exasperate her colleagues with endless optimism. How can she twitter on about 'giving our gift to others' when the 'profession' largely consists of letting yourself be insulted or even attacked by club drunks as you seek desperately to stay clear of the dole-queue? She can't or at least shouldn't.

Present Laughter, first performed in 1942, is the point at which Coward's gently anarchic comedy begins to succumb to conventionality. The brittle, wayward charmer who would have had all his sympathy ten, 15 years before is sent packing by the susceptible actor, Gary Essendine; and at the end he looks likely to realign himself with his estranged wife, who represents the solid domestic virtues. Still, there's fun to be had from his histrionic antics and erotic confusions, the more so since he's played by Donald Sinden, palpitating with narcissistic outrage at the inexplicable failure of those around him to give him his infinite due. □

Weekend competition

No 2654 **Set by Jeff Squiffy**

How the Bard would have enjoyed the events of the past fortnight! A rich cast of buffoons, kings-over-the-water and other knaves: one can almost hear him ask, 'What news from Limehouse?' So let's have an extract (up to 150 words) from the tragedy/comedy/history — according to taste — of the Social Democrats. By 20 February.

No 2651 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Sonnets written on first looking in to breakfast TV.

Report **By Frank Shortstraw**

Space is tight this week, so many a corking entry will have to blush unseen; your reward is in heaven. Those printed will receive eight newtons. A particularly warm handshake to Tim Hopkins, back in the winners' enclosure after a long and unexplained absence. I would refe him to Luke XV, vv. 21-24.

Reminded of that poor proverbial newt
(The one I emulated yesternight),
And pausing to rippon my mourning suit,
I stumble, yawning as the dawning light
Reveals a frost inside as well as out,
The parky air, the plowden furrowed brows.
Adjusting dress and set, I hear it shout —
A popinjay that rantzen raves. I rouse;
My marmalade with Weetabix is mixed;
My trousers and my toupée are askew;
My kee, the battered Ford ignored. Transfixed,
I see the future flash into my view,
Hear bragging, harty voices — who's to say
The thief of night won't end by robin day?

BILL GREENWE

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Much have I wallowed in the realms of Grade,
And many poorish shows and series seen;
Round many South Bank taverns have I been
Where pseuds in fealty to Ambition fade.
Oft of AM-TV had I been told
That fair-browed Peter ruled as his demesne:
Yet never did I see its format lean
Till I heard Frosty speak out as of old:
Then felt I like some watcher of the lies
When a new untruth swims into his ken;
Or like the infant when with shrewd surmise
He saw the naked emperor, while learned men
Look'd at each other with their vulture's eyes —
Silent, upon their share of carrion.

TIM HOPKINS

Shall I compare you to Sir Robin Day?
You are a far more brazen bunch of roughs:
A chattering flock, led by an owlish Jay,
A breakfast dish of Frosted sugar puffs
That come to decorate my morning hours
With stars to tell me all they've said or done;
I curse again those independent pow'rs,
For Plowden's lease hath far too long to run.
I cannot stomach Ford with orange juice,
Nor toast and Parky at that time abide,
The Rantzen views decidedly induce
Grim egg-and-bacon thoughts of Esther-cide.
Your marmaladed musings don't excite me,
Unless perchance as guest you do invite me.

WAYNE SIDESADDLE

Tony Miles

Chess

No 216 **November problems**

The November problems were an interesting selection. **Problem 205 (4rrk1/1b3p2/pp4p1/3pqP1p/P2N2nQ/2P3NR/1P4PP/5R1K)** was relatively easy. After 1.NxP! PxN White must avoid 2.QxP?? because of . . .N-B7ch! but R-N3! is strong. Some possibilities: 2. . .Q-N2; 3.QxP regaining the piece with two extra pawns; 2. . .Q-R1; 3.Q-N5ch (simplest, though 3.P-B6 also looks good enough) K-R2 (. . .Q-N2; 4. QxP); 4. QxPch, N-R3; 5.R-N6! PxR; 6.QxPmate; 2. . .Q-B5; 3.K-N1, R-K8! 4.RxNch, QxR; 5.QxQch, PxQ; 6RxR with an extra pawn and crushing position.

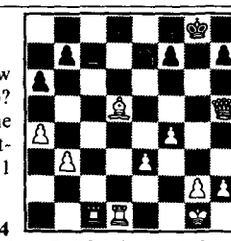
Problem 206 (7r/3rk3/1p1p3q/pP1Rp1p1/P1P2pP1/2QR1P1P/7K/8) was somewhat harder. Clearly White's position is falling apart if he doesn't do something drastic and, equally clearly, 1.QxPch! is the only possibility. (Note that 1.K-N1, QxP; 2.QxPch fails to . . .K-Q1! 3.QxPch, K-B2.) Now it is a trivial matter to establish that White has excellent winning chances after 1. . .PxQ viz 2.RxRch, K-K1; 3.R-Q8ch, K-K2; 4.R(1)-Q7ch, K-K3; 5.R-Q6ch, K-K2; 6.RxQ, RxR; 7.R-KN8 or R-Q5. What, though, if Black declines the offer? Clearly 1. . .K-Q1 fails to 2.QxPch but 1. . .K-B1 presents a greater problem. If 2.Q-B5ch? R-B2; 3.Q-B8ch, K-N2 and Black wins. White's only resource is 2.K-N1!! Now if 2. . .QxP; 3.Q-B6ch, K-K1; 4.R-K5ch! PxR; 5.Q-K6ch, K-B1 (or . . .R-K2; 6.Q-B8ch draws); 6.Q-B6ch drawing by perpetual check so, since he is in serious danger himself, Black must take the queen. So 2. . .PxQ; 3.RxR renewing the threat of R-Q8ch. Black's resources are limited. If 3. . .Q-K3; 4. R(3)-Q6, Q × BP; 5. R-Q 8ch draws. The only winning try is 3. . . R-N1 to create a hole for the king on R1, but then comes 4.R-B7! Q-B3 (if K-K1; 5.R-B8ch draws immediately) 5.R(3)-Q7, K-K1; 6.R-B6! (the point of 4.R-B7) Q-R1 (the only square — if . . .Q-B1; 7.R-QR7 wins for White); 7.R-QR7, K-Q1; 8.R-R8ch, K-Q2; 9.R-R7ch drawing.

Problem 207 (r2qkblr/1p1n1pp1/p1b1p2p/3p4/5B1P/2NB2Q1/PP3PP1/R3R1K1) came from a hilarious game between two Spaniards by the name of Nepomuceno and Raupp. The fun started with a routine sacrifice to expose the black king: 1.RxPch! PxR (obviously 1. . .B-K2; 2.QxP, R-KB1; 3.R(1)-K1 is hopeless); 2.B-N6ch, K-K2; 3.B-Q6ch (3.B-B7 is possible but Black can put up stiff resistance by giving up his queen with 3. . .N-B3!) K-B3. Now White has an elegant study—like forced mate with 4.P-R5! with, remarkably, only two lines: 4. . .BxB; 5.Q-R4ch, K-K4; 6.R-K1mate and 4. . .P-K4; 5.Q-N4! BxB; 6.Q-B5ch, K-K2; 7.Q-B7mate. But . . . he missed it! And found something much more complicated: 4.B-R5, BxB (forced — P-N4; 5.Q-B3ch mates); 5.Q-N6ch, K-K4; 6.R-K1ch, K-Q5; 7.Q-B2! The point of White's play: the way back is cut off. If 7. . .K-B4; 8.NxPch! KxN (or . . .K-N4; 9.B-K2ch); 9.B-B3ch, K-Q5; 10.Q-B3mate and, meanwhile, there is a threat of 8.N-N5ch and 9Q-B3mate. Doubtless White anticipated a speedy finish — he didn't get it! What followed is highly entertaining if not entirely forced: 7. . .B-N5; 8.RxP (threatening N-K2mate) K-B4; 9.N-R4ch, K-N4; 10.B-K2ch, K-R4; 11.P-R3 QxP (a novel way of defending the Qside though . . .Q-KB1 might be better); 12.P-N4! (an equally blunt reply) B-K8; 13.P-N4ch, BxP; 14. PxBch, KxP; 15.R-K3 (continuing the assault but Black has another clever defence) Q-R8ch! 16.KxQ, P-Q5ch; 17.R-B3, KR-KB1; 18.Q-N3ch, K-R4; 19.N-N2! P-QN4; 20.K-N1, BxR; 21.BxB, QR-Q1; 22.Q-R3ch, K-N3; 23.Q-Q6ch, K-R4; 24.Q-B7ch, N-N3; 25.N-B4ch! resigns since . . .PxN; 26.Q-B5ch, K-R5; 27.B-Q1 finally ends the hunt.

Problem 208 (rq4kl/6pp/p1p2r2/7R/4n3/1P2QP2/1P3P1P/RN4K1) caused an astonishing number of hallucinations. Firstly my given solution 1. . .R-N3ch; 2.K-R1, Q-B5! does win but 2. . .QxNP?? doesn't as 3.QxQ is check! However, 2.K-B1 is hard to beat. 2. . .Q-N4ch??, recommended by at least five solvers (!) — are they all short-sighted? — certainly doesn't do the trick. Nor, it seems, does 2. . .Q-Q3 since after 3.N-B3, N-Q7ch; 4.K-K2, NxNP White has 5.R-Q1. When setting the problem I was convinced that the N(B3) was still on N1! In fact 1. . .R-N3ch appears to be inaccurate. Instead there is a much better try in 1. . .Q-K1 to shift the WR first. Then if 2.R-R4, N-N4! is decisive, while 2.R-R3 allows . . .R-N3ch; 3.K-R or B1, Q-Q2; If 2.R(1)-R5, R-N3ch and 3. . .Q-Q2 gives White no good way to guard his back rank. So 2.R(5)-R5, R-N3ch and now (a) 3.K-R1, Q-Q2! 4.N-B3, Q-R6; 5.R-KN1, N-Q7! 6.RxR, PxR (6. . .N-B8?? had two takers! — 7.Q-K6ch) and the threats of . . .Q-B8mate, . . .NxBP and . . .N-B8 give Black a dominant position. (b) 3.K-B1, Q-Q2; 4.N-B3 (if 4.K-K2, R-Q1; 5.N-R3, N-B6ch wins the Q) N-Q7ch (. . .NxN; 5.QxN is not completely clear) 5.K-K2, NxNP; 6.R-Q1, Q-KB2; 7.R-R4, P-B4 with pressure against White's king, but still not a convincing win.

Prizes: Mr Taylor £12, Mr Sobey £8, Messrs Cornforth, Deshmukh, Garfath and James £5 each.

Problem 215



White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked no later than 11 February.

Solution to problem 214

1.P-Q7, B-R3; 2.B-B8! (not P-Q8 = Q, K-K7ch mating) B-B5! 3.B-Q6! 4.Q8 = R!! (not 4.P-Q8 = Q, B-B5! 5.Q-Q2ch, K-B6 winning) B-B5 (if BxP; 5.R-Q3ch); 5.R-Q2! (the point: 5. . .K-B6 is stalemate so . . .) B-N4; 6.R-Q5, K-B5; 7.R-Q2! B-R3; 8.R-Q6, K-N4; 9.R-Q2! draws.

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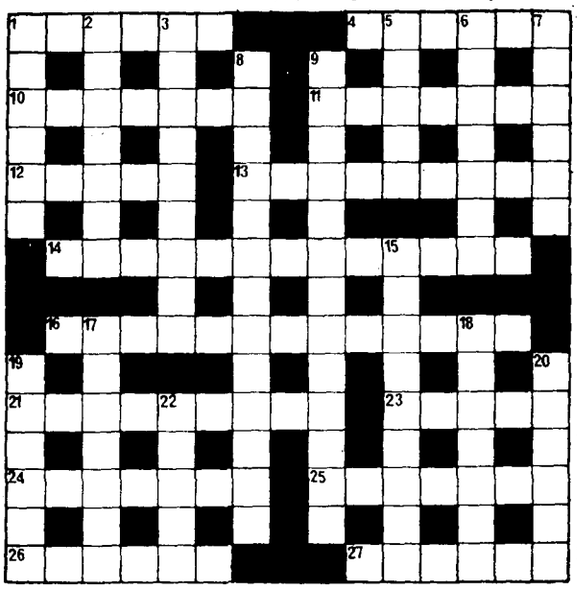


ACROSS

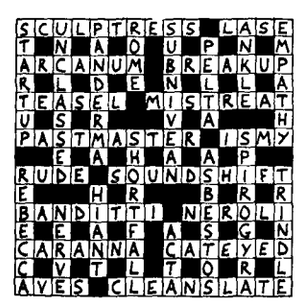
1 How Uncle Tom starts to mend (6)
4 Back large wager on where criminals end up (6)
10 Man who discovers nothing on the Gold Coast? (7)
11 More willing to meet one's fate in the back (7)
12 Imprisons a hundred times (5)
13 Back number with help for a servant (9)
14 Spanish places which involve Ray in scandals (6,7)
16 Scholars bring it back to enjoy life and the record exists among children (13)
21 Food as cut during the reduction (9)
23 Fruit which becomes very soft in a drink (5)
24 Ring the changes and make a correction (7)
25 Unpleasant but a change of heart could produce a return of feeling (7)
26 Outdoor occupation for child without healthy look (6)
27 Had a meal after the hotel was not acquired (6)

DOWN

1 'The — and master spirits of this age' (*J.Caesar*) (6)
2 City which keeps a record in goods (7)
3 A painting is done and places look different (9)
5 Where fifty go into the river after one (5)
6 Sailor beheaded on a ship for being a pirate (7)
7 Speech which puts me in business (6)
8 When the young Chevalier came to town (6,7)
9 Hobby which gives one queer pains in running (13)
15 Maintain nothing is wrong in being alive (9)
17 Power of understanding shows a thing is different (7)
18 Food provided when there is a cover up about page one (7)
19 The insect prevents about a hundred going up (6)
20 Always in the London area it is rigorous (6)
22 Consumed within me a tender passion (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to Salamanca 38



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NATIONAL THEATRE. 928 2252. Olivier (open stage) 'Man & Superman', Lyttelton (proscenium stage) 'The Provoked Wife', 'The Caretaker', 'The Elephant Man', Cottesloe (small auditorium) 'The Ticket-of-Leave Man'. See daily press for dates and times or ring recorded information 928 2256.

OLD VIC. 928 7616 cc 261 1821 'S' Until 14 Feb. Mon. Sat. eves 7.30 p.m., Wed. & Sat. 2 p.m. 'The Relapse' by Sir John Vanbrugh.

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Meetings

BRANDT REPORT: Programme for Survival. Frank Judd speaks Westminster UNA Mon. 9 Feb., 7 p.m. The Well, Elizabeth St, SW1 (opp. Victoria Coach Stn). All welcome.

FIGHTING RACISM at the Town Hall, Fabian fringe meeting. Labour Party Local Govt. Conference Blackpool 14 Feb. 12.30 p.m. Chair: Jack Straw MP. Tel. 01-222 8877.

HISTORY WORKSHOP London Seminar. Hans Medick (Göttingen): 'Youth Culture and the Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism'. Wed. 18 Feb. 7.30-9.30 p.m. 'The Black Horse', Rathbone Place, London W1.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries 06285 26464.

SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY? Fabian Society Day Seminar with Michael Meacher, David Blake, Francis Cripps, Vincent Cable. 21 Feb. Tickets £2.50. For details ring 01-222 8877.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme. Sun. 8 Feb. 8 p.m. Open Q/A Meeting 'The Mystery of Man'. ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION & The Trial of The Four. Discussion for socialists on recent developments in China. Thurs. 12 Feb., 7.30 p.m. Roebuck, Tottenham Ct Rd. (Warren St tube).

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, Gower St, WC1E 6BT. Lunch-Hour Lectures, 1.20 to 2. Botany Theatre. 10 Feb. 'The Poetry of Robert Burns' by Professor Karl Miller; 12 Feb. 'Voyager Observations of Saturn and its Satellites' by Dr G.E. Hunt.

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